

Independent Stakeholders' Report

UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake

Shadow Report to the UNFSS+4

July 2025

Ethiopia & Italy 2025

UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT + 4

STOCKTAKE

Cover photograph: © FAO/Paul Joynson-Hicks

Rwanda – Veronica Jackson, Tanzanian chef, purchasing fresh herbs and spices at a local market.

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SUMMARY

In preparation for the United Nations Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake, the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub facilitated the preparation of this Independent Stakeholders' Report to reflect the voices, experiences and priorities of non-state actors involved in food systems transformation across all regions and sectors. This report builds on the 2023 precedent and was developed through an inclusive process that included a global online questionnaire, UNFSS+4 regional and thematic preparatory meetings, a SparkBlue public consultation, and iterative reviews by both the Hub's Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory Group (SENA) and the High-Level UN Food Systems Advisory Group. This process ensured that a wide range of non-state stakeholders were able to share practices and propose ways forward for UNFSS+4 and beyond. The findings were analyzed and synthesized in this report by an independent writer to reflect stakeholders' experiences, concerns and recommendations.

This 2025 Independent Stakeholders Report for the UNFSS+4 shows **growing emphasis on inclusive governance and stronger accountability mechanisms to challenge structural power imbalances and reaffirm the role of communities** in shaping food systems. **Multistakeholder platforms and coalitions are increasingly recognized** as key avenues for collaboration, but stakeholders stress the **need to move beyond participation toward rights-based co-governance** - embedding formal roles for marginalized groups, particularly Women and Youth, in decision-making. They are **calling for robust monitoring, transparency, and concrete accountability frameworks** to ensure national commitments are met, as well as institutionalized participation, dedicated financing, and intergenerational equity strategies. There is also a clear demand for **UNFSS+4 to enhance alignment of policies and financing across national, regional, and global frameworks**—such as the SDGs, NDCs, and COP30—**positioning food systems at the core of sustainable development.**

Stakeholders in general call for more inclusive national food systems transformation pathways, including processes of pathway development and implementation. They expressed disappointment with what they described as often superficial or symbolic consultation processes. They underlined that without clear feedback loops, follow-up mechanisms and visible commitment from decision-makers, food systems strategies risk ending up being ineffective. Lack of meaningful inclusion is considered not as a technical oversight but as a matter of political will, calling for real joint decision-making.

FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS: FAMILIARITY, ALIGNMENT AND VALUES

Stakeholders across regions show varying levels of familiarity with their national food systems transformation plans, though many did not respond to questions on details, suggesting limited awareness or engagement. While some noted positive examples of inclusion, many felt that their perspectives were not fully reflected in national strategies, indicating a disconnect between stakeholder priorities and official plans. There was also a feeling of limited recognition of stakeholders' contributions to policy processes, with many unsure whether their input had been considered. Overall, the responses point to gaps in participation, transparency, and alignment between national directives and the values or objectives of diverse stakeholder groups.

Farmers and Producers express concern over misalignment between national policy objectives and the actual needs of their communities, noting that key issues such as income, soil and water health, and agrobiodiversity, neglected and underutilized species, are not adequately addressed. They emphasize the lack of bottom-up, community-led approaches, calling for greater integration of human rights, gender responsiveness, and local leadership, along with technical and financial support tailored to local contexts. Overall, their feedback highlights the need for more targeted, locally responsive strategies that prioritize domestic markets and reflect the socio-economic and environmental realities of agricultural communities.

Civil Society Organizations stress the absence of structured national pathways or their poor formulation, and underline that awareness of pathways remains limited among grassroot actors, while inclusive implementation mechanisms are largely missing. In particular, **Youth and Women** call for pathways processes that ensure the participation of grassroot and marginalized groups and that are firmly rooted in human rights principles.

↓ **Sudan – Scientific and technical partners meet to monitor crop progress in Sennar State. These actors are support the application of research and innovation to strengthen sustainable and resilient food systems.**
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Indigeous Peoples stressed the need to place Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and locally adapted solutions on equal footing with conventional research, institutionalizing co-decision mechanisms and creating space for long-term engagement in pathway formulation and implementation through legal and financial support structures.

PERCEIVED PROGRESS TOWARDS FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Of the respondents which answered questions on this topic, many felt that their country is on track or partially on track to achieve planned food systems transformation results. Fewer respondents viewed progress as falling short, while others noted it is too early to assess outcomes or were uncertain about the implementation status.

Positive examples mentioned include the implementation of dietary guidelines, the active implementation of national pathways through partnerships and dedicated investments, policy alignment with global frameworks, alignment of pathways with other national and investment plans, and promising national strategies for food recovery.

Conversely, frameworks are repeatedly described as aspirational rather than operational, lacking binding commitments and clear, transparent implementation plans. Furthermore, concerns were raised on the lack of technology integration, especially digital solutions. Many stressed the persistent financing bottlenecks preventing the effective implementation of national pathways. In their view, the current fiscal and financing models fail to uphold equity and accountability, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining transformation efforts.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Youth and Women-led Workers' and Trade Union organizations report being underrepresented in decision-making processes and lacking meaningful influence on national food systems policies, despite their vital roles within food systems. They highlighted the absence of government efforts to meaningfully engage them in planning and implementation, noting exclusion from key areas such as budget discussions, legislative development, land governance, agricultural extension, and public investment. They argue that this invisibility results in policy frameworks that fail to address their unique challenges.

Youth express concerns over the disconnect between high-level policy frameworks and the lived realities of young people, particularly in marginalized communities and the superficial nature of participatory mechanisms. They call for inclusive and transparent monitoring systems that track how youth inputs inform decision-making, along with disaggregated data collection that captures youth-specific challenges and innovations. They propose concrete accountability structures, such as formal youth advisory bodies embedded within national food systems governance institutions, periodic independent evaluations of youth inclusion and clear, time-bound commitments to intergenerational equity. They stressed the importance of upholding rights-based approaches and ensuring that Youth participation moves from symbolic presence to shared decision-making authority. The exclusion of Youth not only silences a critical demographic group but also overlooks the potential of emerging leaders to drive sustainable practices and innovation within food systems.

Small-scale Farmers and Producers, Indigenous Peoples, including pastoralist communities, NGOs and Local Communities, as well as Education and Academia and Science and Technological Community are concerned by the lack of sufficient engagement and their symbolic representation in the implementation and follow up of national pathways. They highlight that pathways often overlook key issues including the protection of grazing lands and economic rights of pastoralist communities and the realities of indigenous food systems, favouring large-scale agricultural production and monocropping. They also mention the lack of transparency and the prioritization of political interests over inclusive, rights-based approaches as weaknesses of national pathways and their implementation.

Business and Industry express dissatisfaction with limited engagement in shaping national pathways, especially by businesses in the hidden middle which are often neglected in policy frameworks.

Consumers' Organizations noted the absence of consumer-centric approaches within existing frameworks. They point to a lack of emphasis on consumer behavior as a lever for systemic change, underscoring the need for more inclusive and transformative strategies that integrate consumption patterns into the broader food systems agenda.

Forms of engagement

The most common forms of stakeholder engagement in national food systems pathways over the past four years included national dialogues, capacity building, training, and public awareness or advocacy efforts. In contrast, participation in core processes such as monitoring, evaluation, and policy design has been significantly more limited. Stakeholder participation in high-level intergovernmental meetings and resource mobilization for national pathway implementation was notably low, indicating challenges in access and engagement. This limited involvement may hinder the alignment of national and global policy processes and highlights underdeveloped areas in funding and financial planning for food systems transformation.

The most effective engagement channels were i) multistakeholder platforms, ii) dedicated consultations/workshops and iii) direct engagement with National Convenors.

Challenges for engagement

Stakeholders across all groups report significant challenges in relation to meaningful engagement by key institutional actors in food systems governance. At the national level, opaque consultation processes, fragmented governance, and bureaucratic rigidity are mentioned for hindering effective participation, especially for farmer cooperatives, grassroots groups, and those promoting agroecology and rights-based approaches. Business and academic stakeholders note weak interministerial coordination, while political instability and limited access to funding further widen the participation gap.

At the subnational level, engagement suffers from underfunding, limited technical capacity, staff shortages, and leadership turnover. Many stakeholders face barriers rooted in institutional mistrust, cultural dynamics, and exclusion - such as Indigenous Peoples and youth. While some academic and business actors manage to establish ties with local authorities, access remains uneven and often reliant on informal networks.

Engagement with the UN system is seen as excessively complex, lacking transparency, and with limited funding for participation. Small-scale actors, women's organizations and civil society groups face high travel costs and bureaucratic barriers, while business and academic actors cite fragmented engagement and weak follow-up mechanisms.

Stakeholders report limited access to Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) due to restrictive eligibility criteria, technocratic approaches, and unclear decision-making. MDB priorities are observed as misaligned with local needs, and that there is limited support for agroecology and food systems transformation. Green and climate finance mechanisms remain largely inaccessible to civil society actors.

Regional integration organizations are seen as inaccessible, especially for civil society and youth groups. Political imbalances, fragmented agendas, and the low prioritization of food systems limit structured engagement. The scientific community calls for better alignment between policy priorities and local research needs.

International NGOs face criticism for lack of coordination among themselves and information sharing, which leads to duplication and reinforces inequalities. Civil society and academic actors call for equitable, context-sensitive partnerships and improved funding access.

Engagement with multinational corporations is often perceived as lacking transparency and without mechanisms for co-creation. Civil society groups, youth, and women report exclusion, while academic and business actors note corporate dominance in shaping research agendas.

Finally, as far as academia and research is concerned, stakeholders highlight unstable funding, limited collaboration opportunities, and disconnects between research and practice. They report that systemic inefficiencies and power asymmetries in academic institutions hinder inclusive, long-term partnerships and locally driven innovation.

Recommended strategies for their improved engagement

To enhance their engagement in food systems transformation efforts, stakeholders most frequently call for capacity building, support with resource mobilization, including shared fundraising platforms, and stronger stakeholder engagement in bridging humanitarian aid with long-term food systems transformation. They also stress the importance of stronger partnerships and collaborations through working groups or multistakeholder platforms, emphasizing that synergies among governments, NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector are essential for sustainable transformation. Enhancing community and grassroot engagement and promoting research and data-driven approaches (e.g. collaborative research and data-sharing partnerships) were also among the strategies recommended. Indigenous Peoples in particular called for the institutionalization of inclusive platforms, legal guarantees for participation and citizen-led monitoring to ensure more equitable and impactful engagement.

TRACKING COMMITMENTS AND FOSTERING COLLABORATION

The report reveals a widespread gap in the formalization and monitoring of stakeholder ***commitments*** to food systems transformation. Many organizations either lack time-bound, measurable objectives or rely on fragmented internal reviews rather than comprehensive monitoring frameworks. Most commitments remain voluntary, with few supported by structured, centralized mechanisms capable of tracking progress and informing decisions. This may point to limited institutional capacity, low prioritization, or weak awareness of the importance of trackable commitments. Nevertheless, each stakeholder groups presented promising examples for accountability frameworks, including Indigenous Peoples-led initiatives (the Indigenous Navigator), performance indicators by the Science and Technological community, measurable commitments by NGOs, and the increasingly structured and time-bound targets with metric-based indicators often embedded in broader corporate sustainability strategies, building on standardized frameworks, by Business and Industry. These practices can offer valuable insights for other stakeholder groups on strengthening transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment in monitoring commitments.

Many respondents did not provide information on whether their organization has a clear ***strategy for partnering*** with the public sector and other food systems actors. Among those who did, some indicated the presence of a defined partnership strategy, reflecting active efforts to align with national food systems transformation goals. Others acknowledged the absence of such a strategy, highlighting possible gaps in strategic planning, institutional capacity, or integration into national processes.

Although most stakeholders appear to lack a formal strategy for collaboration, they have nonetheless built a densely interconnected web of partnerships across the food systems landscape through advocacy and awareness raising efforts, multistakeholders engagement and capacity building. Youth have been increasingly engaged in different forms of policy dialogues at global, national and sub-national levels. Business and Industry used broader strategic approaches for collaboration combining capacity development and local farmer empowerment with public-private partnerships and structured collaboration platforms with a clear trend to reduce environmental impact and promote climate-smart practices. Co-governance models also emerged, that engage civil society and Indigenous Peoples fostering transparency and accountability in sustainability efforts. Education and Academia and Science and Technology stakeholders have become more actively engaged in co-developing monitoring frameworks and often engage in formalized partnerships, strategic dialogues and national coordination hubs to streamline stakeholder engagement and align policy actions and data-driven strategies.



↑ Egypt – Food chain labourers play a critical but often overlooked role in the food supply chain, here shown unloading food for distribution to retailers. © FAO/Heba Khamis

UNLOCKING INVESTMENT

Over the past four years, stakeholders have mobilized financial resources to support food systems transformation through strategic partnerships, blended finance, targeted fundraising and capacity-building initiatives. They also leveraged tools such as climate finance, government programmes, and donor-aligned research. Despite these efforts, stakeholders (mainly smaller actors including grassroot organizations) continue to face persistent challenges including limited funding availability, a misalignment between donor priorities and systemic approaches, lack of access to networks and information institutional capacity gaps and regulatory obstacles. Many funding mechanisms are seen as fragmented and short-term, often excluding smaller organizations and failing to support integrated, multisectoral solutions.

To enhance funding mobilization, stakeholders recommend a multi-pronged approach focusing on strategic partnerships, innovative financing (e.g. carbon credits, payment for ecosystem services, social impact bonds and crowdfunding), microfinance and alignment with policy priorities. They also propose leveraging global platforms (e.g. those related to the UNFSS processes), strengthening collaboration through consortia and public-private partnerships, including at regional and local levels. Academic engagement to supporting capacity-building in grant writing, financial management, and targeted financial support for the empowerment of Youth and Women, especially related to agroecology and Indigenous food systems, has also been emphasized. Simplified application processes and long-term funding are stressed for youth-led initiatives. Aligning food systems efforts with national development plans, climate strategies, and global frameworks have also been pointed out for improving access to climate and biodiversity funding, supported by stronger impact measurement and strategic communication to attract investment. Stakeholders underscored that unlocking investments for food systems transformation requires not only capital but also coordination, technical support and increased transparency.

THE UNFSS+4 AND BEYOND

Expectations from the Stocktake and the Hub

Stakeholders envision UNFSS+4 as a moment to reaffirm commitment to food systems transformation grounded in equity, accountability, and concrete, measurable outcomes aligned with realities on the ground. They stress that the future of food systems transformation depends on meaningful collaboration, transparent follow-up and long-term investment in the leadership of those most affected by current systemic inequalities.

Farmers and Producers expect the Stocktake to prioritize concrete, scalable actions that support climate-resilient and agroecological practices, backed by accessible and sustained financing. They call for robust accountability and monitoring mechanisms, fair pricing, risk reduction, and long-term, inclusive partnerships. Additionally, they would like to see the UNFSS+4 outcomes align with global climate and health agendas, and call for the promotion of nutritious, minimally processed foods, and recognition of traditional knowledge. They expect UNFSS+4 to reinforce local control of resources and access to digital innovation, along with greater cooperation and engagement from governments and stronger support for small-scale producers.

> They call on the Hub to establish regional coordination mechanisms (building on the CFS CSIPM) and enable stakeholder engagement beyond high-level forums, through thematic working groups. They envision the Hub strengthening transparency and accountability through periodic progress reports, using a global food systems scorecard supported by third-party monitoring and citizen engagement to track national UNFSS+4 commitments. They urge the Hub to serve as a catalyst for action, promoting collaboration, accountability, and mobilizing financing, and to help expand partnerships among agricultural enterprises, impact investors, and SMEs to advance food systems solutions.

Civil Society Organizations expect the Stocktake to elevate the visibility of agroecology amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups such as SMEs, fishers and small organizations from the Global South. They also wish to see UNFSS+4 celebrate grassroots knowledge and local solutions, promote inclusive discussions on healthy diets that consider regional contexts, and lead to concrete financing commitments for climate adaptation and food security. Finally, they expect the Stocktake to lead to stronger multistakeholder platforms, better monitoring of sustainable practices, the integration of human rights -especially the right to food - into policies and improved recognition of pastoralist food systems. They expressed strong interest in discussing topics on sustainable certification, agroecology, regenerative agriculture, agrobiodiversity, policy reform, food loss and waste reduction, innovative financing, healthy diets, and women's and youth empowerment with a focus on inclusive discussions that elevate the voices of frontline actors.

A trade union of informal women workers stressed that informal workers are integral to every stage of food systems yet their contributions often remain invisible due to their dispersed nature. As part of building just and equitable food systems, these stakeholders expect stronger recognition of informal workers, tangible outcomes that support informal workers organization into micro- and meso-level enterprises as well as actionable support for informal worker-led enterprises as a way of enhancing their collective voice, fostering innovative local solutions, and strengthening their bargaining power.

Similarly, there is a clear expectation from the Stocktake to promote the development of *bottom-up* gender data strategy. This would enable greater visibility and inclusion of informal, women, rural, and youth workers bringing forward their challenges and innovations. To achieve this, stakeholders such as governments, multilateral organizations, academia, economists and the private sector are expected to partner with grassroots worker organizations to co-design and implement such frameworks. They argue these outcomes would contribute to more inclusive, evidence-based policymaking that reflects the realities on the ground.

Youth and Women express clear expectations for long-term and meaningful engagement and collaboration with governments, UN agencies and local institutions, with an emphasis on structured participation in decision-making processes and policy dialogue and access to financing and knowledge-sharing platforms beyond symbolic inclusion.

> **These stakeholder groups and other Civil Society Organizations urge the Hub to place greater emphasis on integrating grassroot voices not only in UNFSS follow up processes, but within broader global and national food systems governance with a focus on locally adapted solutions. They also call for increased technical and financial support, enabling civil societys to fully engage with the Hub and its initiatives through adequate funding, interpretation services and increased transparency in decision making.**

Youth look at the UNFSS as an opportunity to amplify issues related to intergenerational justice, decent work and climate-resilient agriculture. They call for increased global collaboration for better exchanges of technical and educational resources and actively involving young people in achieving the SDGs. They hope the Stocktake will foster stronger integration of food systems transformation into countries' NDCs under the Paris Agreement, and greater alignment between UNFSS+4 commitments and international climate forums such as the COP30. The UNFSS+4 is seen as a critical platform to reaffirm equity, inclusivity and financing as pillars of national and global food systems policy. Their expectations from the Stocktake includes support for the institutionalization of youth participation mechanisms through regular engagement in governance platforms such as the World Food Forum's National Chapters, along with enablers of youth engagement such as digital platforms, open-access dashboards and participatory monitoring tools.

> **Youth called on the Hub to continue acting as a convenor of intergenerational dialogue and innovation and urged stronger alignment of food systems transformation with broader global frameworks. They wish to see the Hub play a key role in harnessing political will and engaging stakeholders to strengthen connections between grassroots actors and policymakers.**

Education and Academia and Science and Technology stakeholders expect that the Stocktake will foster collaboration across diverse actors, including academia, business, UN agencies, financial institutions, and civil society, to co-develop region-specific, inclusive, and innovative food systems solutions. Their priority areas for discussion and action include agroecology, climate-resilient technologies, circular economy practices, sustainable financing, food entrepreneurship, and the integration of Indigenous and local knowledge into food security and nutrition strategies.

Business and Industry actors expect UNFSS+4 to help foster strategic dialogue with governments, intergovernmental organizations, and financial institutions to identify impactful areas for private sector engagement with clear opportunities to unlock private investment in food systems transformation. They seek active roles in implementing national food systems pathways, particularly through investment and collaboration with local communities on food security and climate action. They expect UNFSS+4 to result in their greater inclusion in dialogues and decision-making spaces, and increased focus on the "hidden middle" of value chains, to boost resilience, decarbonization, and food security and tangible outcomes to help improve financing access for SMEs.

Business and Industry, from international and (in particular) national companies to SMEs at local level, aspire to be seen as an ally in both food systems transformation and strengthening accountability. This Stakeholder group believes and recognizes the enhanced need to work collaboratively, reach consensus, ensure uptake and implement practical solutions and approaches. This is a key requisite to address new, unfolding, developments and food security and nutrition scenarios and would support the 3rd objective of UNFSS+4, '*Unlocking Investments for food systems transformation*'. Business and Industry has, and continues to, adhere to all codes of conduct and engagement processes of UN agencies, including the UN Global Compact, and through the respective private sector strategies of the Rome-based agencies. The sector is concerned that the introduction of additional exclusion parameters in accountability mechanisms both limits and discourages engagement (at international and national level) and is contrary to incentivizing companies to make and achieve the needed UNFSS commitments.

To sustain ongoing dialogue, Business and Industry propose that the Hub establishes regular interactive multistakeholder exchange sessions (brief targeted webinars), drawing on the successful model of UN Food Systems Dialogues. They ask for derisking mechanisms as well as a (more) visible Hub presence in global policy spaces, such as COP30, to ensure that food systems remain integrated within multilateral agendas.

A common request among several stakeholder groups *(Farmers and Producers, Business and Industry, Education and Academia, Science and Technological Community and Civil Society Organizations)* is the development of a digital interactive Global Knowledge Hub to compile best practices, including effective regulatory frameworks, standardized measurement methodologies, as well as research and case studies on food systems transformation. They see this as facilitating ongoing, easily accessible engagement, enabling stakeholders to share knowledge, innovations, and progress in real time, while supporting continuous learning and the localization and adaptation of solutions.

Stakeholders' priorities for the next five years and support expected from governments

Across all stakeholder groups, clear priorities have been identified to support food systems transformation in the coming years. These reflect a shared focus on agroecology, climate resilience, inclusion, finance and stronger governance mechanisms, anchored in equity and locally led solutions. Governments and partners are urged to create enabling conditions that allow these priorities to materialize and scale through policy support, dedicated resources and long-term planning.

Farmers and Producers prioritize agroecological practices and call for stronger public investment to ensure that producers, especially small-scale, are actively included in food systems transitions. They also seek support for farmers' organizations and cooperatives to access financing and appropriate services tailored to their specific needs.

Business and Industry plan to focus on regenerative agriculture and climate change mitigation, and ask for financial incentives and recognition of the role of different parts of the value chain, especially the hidden middle. They wish to see clear, outcome-based policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as streamlined approval processes for advanced technologies and stronger public-private initiatives.

Civil Society Organizations prioritize actions that include promoting equitable and gender-inclusive food systems, with a focus on traditional and Indigenous knowledge, agroecology, and promoting healthy diets through public procurement. They also emphasize fostering youth entrepreneurship and addressing food loss and waste. They call upon governments to establish policies that facilitate the inclusion of marginalized communities in food systems plans, introduce food donation laws, incorporate food loss and waste reduction into national climate change mitigation strategies; invest in and provide political support to agroecological roadmaps, and facilitate Youth employment in the agrifood sector.

Youth call on national governments to institutionalize structural inclusion and long-term accountability ensuring formal representation of both Youth and Women in national food systems governance, with concrete participation targets. They urge legal reforms that guarantee land tenure and resource access for youth and women; mentorship and training programmes for youth and women agrifood entrepreneurs and dedicated financial instruments—including concessional credit lines, credit guarantee schemes, diaspora bonds, and blended finance mechanisms—to support youth- and women-led enterprises.

Education and Academia and Science and Technology prioritize interdisciplinary research on resilient crops, post-harvest innovations and Indigenous food knowledge positioning themselves as regional hubs for policy studies, youth incubation and technology validation. They aim to strengthen collaboration with private enterprises to foster food innovation, and train rural youth, women and self-help groups in food processing, entrepreneurship and hygiene, thereby strengthening local capacities and promoting inclusive development. Their requests to governments include integrating them into advisory committees, working groups and national consultations on food systems, support for joint research calls and strengthened linkages between Academia and Education and Science and Technology, Business and Industry, international organizations and the government, through stable public-private partnerships.

Linking UNFSS+4 to global initiatives and processes

Stakeholders emphasized the need to align the outcomes of UNFSS+4 with existing global frameworks to ensure coherence and amplify impact. Key recommendations include integrating food systems transformation into national climate commitments (under the Paris Climate Agreement), strengthening synergies with the One Health approach and linking efforts to global biodiversity, health and finance agendas, such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, IFAD and World Bank financing and global health initiatives. Several contributions stressed the importance of breaking policy silos, fostering cross-sectoral dialogue and using digital platforms and research networks to disseminate food systems innovations that contribute to climate adaptation, nutrition, and sustainability. Strong partnerships with relevant organizations, such as the WHO, FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity, is seen as essential to promote holistic food policies that improve public health, protect biodiversity and mitigate environmental degradation.

WAYS FORWARD

A key theme across stakeholder contributions is the urgent need for a structural shift from fragmented consultations to inclusive, accountable governance rooted in rights-based co-leadership. Governance should be seen not just as institutional structures but as the political space where decisions are made, power is shared, and responsibilities upheld. While terms like "inclusion," "empowerment," and "equity" are common in institutional narratives, stakeholders perceive their implementation as uneven and often symbolic. Without clear duty-bearers, time-bound goals, and enforceable mechanisms, stakeholders stress that these principles risk losing meaning. ***Embedding rights-based approaches authentically within governance is essential for legitimacy, sustainability and impact.***

Many stakeholders also note the lack of consumer-centred approaches in national plans. There is growing demand for policies addressing food environments, dietary patterns, and consumption behaviors. This includes ***promoting healthier diets aligned with planetary boundaries and balancing strategies across the full complexity of food systems, not just production.***

Fragmentation remains a major barrier to transformation. Greater coherence is needed between national pathways and global agendas, including climate, biodiversity, human rights, and development finance. ***Coherence must be built through national planning, institutional coordination, and mutual accountability***. But coherence also requires credibility: without ***actionable, visible plans***, transformative efforts remain aspirational.

Stakeholders emphasize ***robust accountability and monitoring frameworks*** at all levels, tracking progress, establishing clear responsibilities, enabling participatory oversight, and ensuring transparency. ***Building a culture of mutual accountability based on rights, metrics, and continuous feedback*** is critical to move beyond token participation toward results-driven transformation.

Despite fatigue and disappointment, stakeholders continue to engage and push for change, showing that transformation remains a shared goal. The path forward demands reconfigured governance, shifted institutional responsibility, and committed, rights-based, locally grounded solutions. ***Stakeholders*** seek ***recognition as co-creators, calling for a shift from inclusion to co-governance, vision to action, and promises to responsibility.***

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Chapter one 'Introduction and background': This chapter includes information regarding the objectives of the UNFSS+4, how the report was produced a methodological note. It also includes a brief comparison of stakeholder participation and engagement in food systems transformation between 2023 and 2025, based on key findings and insights from the 2023 Stakeholders' Contribution Document (Shadow Report).

Chapter two 'Reflecting on the progress towards the transformation of food systems: The first part of this chapter focuses on the inclusivity and alignment of national food systems transformation pathways (or similar plans) with stakeholders' values and objectives. It explores how aware of and engaged stakeholders have been in the implementation of national pathways or other food systems transformation efforts. It also highlights stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of governance and coordination mechanisms for engaging them, as well as their views on the progress made in implementing national food systems transformation pathways. The second part of the chapter explores the persisting challenges stakeholders face in effectively engaging with other food systems actors and their recommendations for improving engagement.

Chapter three 'Tracking commitments and fostering collaborations': This chapter focuses on stakeholders' commitments and collaborations. It examines whether stakeholders have established clear, measurable commitments and monitoring mechanisms to track their own progress. It highlights concrete actions they have taken to foster collaboration within and across stakeholder groups and other food systems actors. It also looks at opportunities to further enhance collaboration.

Chapter four 'Unlocking investments for food systems transformation': This chapter presents stakeholders' experiences with mobilization of financial resources to support food systems transformation over the past four years. It explores the successful fundraising strategies stakeholders implemented and the challenges they faced in securing financing for their initiatives. Finally, it includes their recommendations for improving access to funding for different stakeholder groups.

Chapter five 'The UNFSS+4 and beyond: Emerging expectations and priorities': This chapter explores the types of discussions, key actors and topics stakeholders are most interested in during the UNFSS+4 and their expectations from it. It also presents expectations on how the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub can enhance engagement with and across Stakeholders post-UNFSS+4. Finally, it explores how the UNFSS+4 outcomes could be effectively linked to other global initiatives and Stakeholder priorities for the post UNFSS+4 and support expected from national governments.

Chapter six 'Way forward': Based on the previous chapters, this one concludes the Report with insights and additional reflections on advancing food systems transformation through more effective stakeholder involvement.

Annexes:

- Acronyms
- Survey questions
- Stakeholders' challenges in engaging with other food systems actors
- List of survey contributors
- List of people who supported the preparation of the Report

↓ **Italy – In a greenhouse, a farmer holds basil and tomatoes grown using hydroponic techniques, reflecting how farmers are utilizing innovation to advance sustainable food production.**
© FAO/Riccardo De Luca



CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2023, the first UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+2) resulted in an updated narrative for sustainable food systems, building upon the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) itself and the new Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation. This narrative reaffirms sustainable food systems as key to accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with UNFSS+2 highlighting progress, ongoing challenges, and continued government prioritization. Before the UNFSS+2, a **Stakeholders' Contribution Document—Shadow Report** was developed, recognizing stakeholders' key role in food systems transformation. The **Secretary-General's Call for Action** further emphasized the need for inclusive, participatory approaches involving Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples, and businesses, alongside knowledge sharing, cross-sectoral collaboration and mutual accountability.

Looking ahead to July 2025, the second UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4) will serve as a critical milestone in advancing toward more sustainable food systems. The UNFSS+4 will focus on reflecting on the progress towards food systems transformation at national and global levels, fostering collaboration and commitments, and unlocking investment opportunities for scaling impactful solutions for transformative action.

Objectives of the UNFSS+4 Independent Stakeholders' Report

Ahead of UNFSS+4 and in line with its objectives, this second Independent Stakeholders' Report (ISR) has been produced, to share the perspective of a variety of food systems non-state actors (NSAs) and complement the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Stocktaking report as commissioned by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General.

Building on this mandate, this Stakeholders' Report is distinct from the report of the UN Secretary General, which primarily reflects the perspectives and actions of governments, actors from the food systems Ecosystem of Support, including the UNFSS Coalitions of Action, and the UN system. The ISR focuses exclusively on the voices, experiences, commitments and challenges of Farmers and Producer organizations, Youth and Women's groups, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, the Business and Industry sector, Education and Academia, and other non-state actors.

This report reflects the efforts and experiences of stakeholders in food systems transformation at local, national, regional and global levels — both in relation to the implementation of national pathways, or similar plans, and in the context of broader initiatives beyond them. It builds upon the precedent set by the first Stakeholders' Contribution Document published in 2023 ahead of the UNFSS+2. However, it goes further by offering a more structured reflection on Stakeholder engagement, collaboration, commitments and financing. It aims to support the UNFSS+4 goals by amplifying the diversity of NSA voices and strengthening their contribution to shaping the UNFSS+4 outcomes.

Preparation process of the Independent Stakeholders' Report

The preparation of this ISR is the result of a stakeholder-led process and guidance from the **UN Food Systems Coordination Hub's Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory (SENA) Group**. Comprising of representatives of Youth, Women's organizations, Indigenous Peoples, Producers and the Business and Industry, SENA played a central role in shaping the report's development, ensuring that the approach was inclusive, transparent and representative of diverse perspectives, while preserving the nuance and integrity of each contribution.

As part of its facilitation role, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub proposed a work plan and timeline, drawing on lessons from the previous ISR and refined with feedback from SENA. Based on this collaboration, a concept note and questionnaire—aligned with the overall UNFSS+4 Concept Note—were developed. The concept note was also shared with the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General.

The final questionnaire, was launched in English, French and Spanish and remained open from 7 March to 28 April 2025. It was widely disseminated through networks including the CFS Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism, UN Major Groups, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), and through social media. This outreach generated over 500 submissions, reflecting broad engagement.

To ensure impartiality, an independent writer was selected to analyze responses and reflect the diversity of perspectives without bias. SENA was kept informed throughout via regular updates.

A first draft of the report was published on UN Development Programme's (UNDP) SparkBlue platform for global consultation (26 May–6 June 2025), inviting additional feedback from non-state actors. During this period, SENA and the High-Level UN Food Systems Advisory Group also reviewed the draft. This additional consultative step further reinforced the openness and legitimacy of the process.

Following this, the independent writer integrated all feedback into a final draft, which was based on analysis of over 500 questionnaire responses—321 of which were attributed to unique NSAs—plus 19[1] SparkBlue submissions, seven direct emails, and inputs from five UNFSS+4 Regional Preparatory Meetings[2] and the UNFSS+4 Preparatory Youth Conference held in Bangkok on 15–16 May 2025[3].

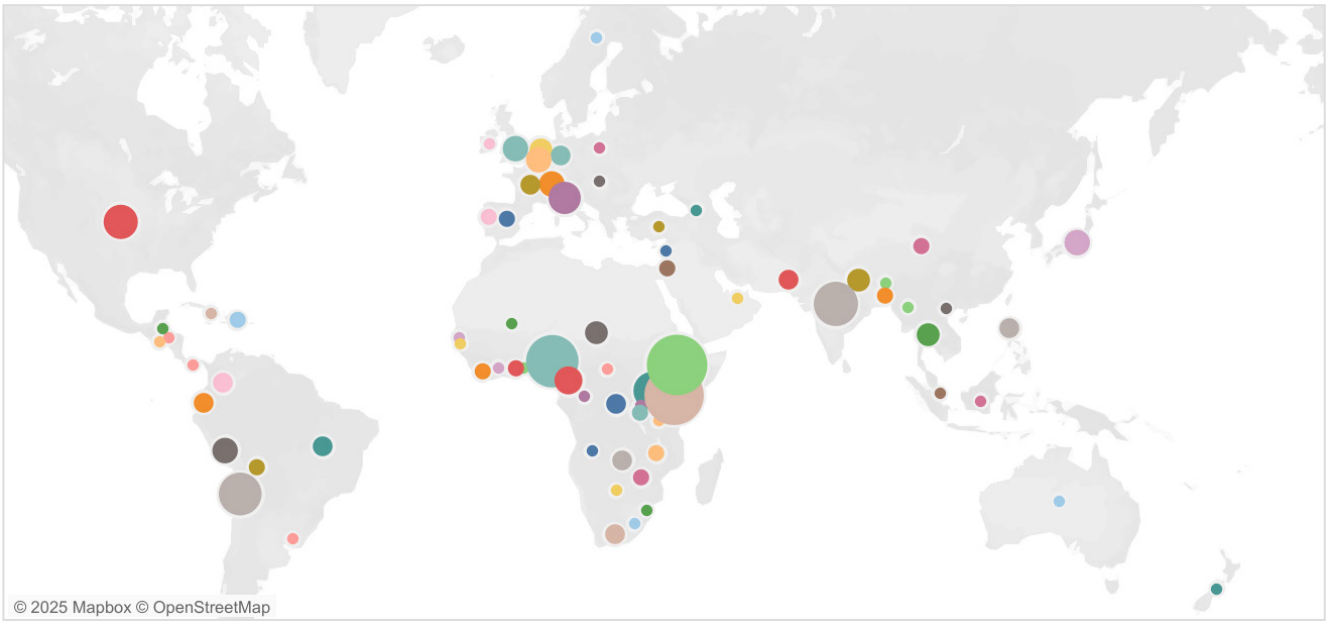
1 Eight of the contributors had also contributed through the questionnaire and two were UN contributions, thus these were not counted.

2 https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/member-state-dialogue/regional-progress-reviews/unfss-4-regional-preparatory-meetings/en#:~:text=In%20preparation%20for%20the%20UN,from%20March%20to%20May%202025.

3 https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/hub-solution/youth-leadership-programme/preparatory-youth-conference-for-unfss-4/en

FIGURE 1

Location of stakeholder respondents to the UNFSS+4 Independent Stakeholders' Report, through the open questionnaire, public consultation and direct email, where information is available



Note: This map visualizes the geographic distribution of respondents to the report, based on the locations provided. Each circle represents a country or region where responses were recorded. The size of the circle reflects the number of responses from that location — the larger the circle, the greater the number of contributions. Different colors are used to distinguish locations but do not represent specific categories or values.

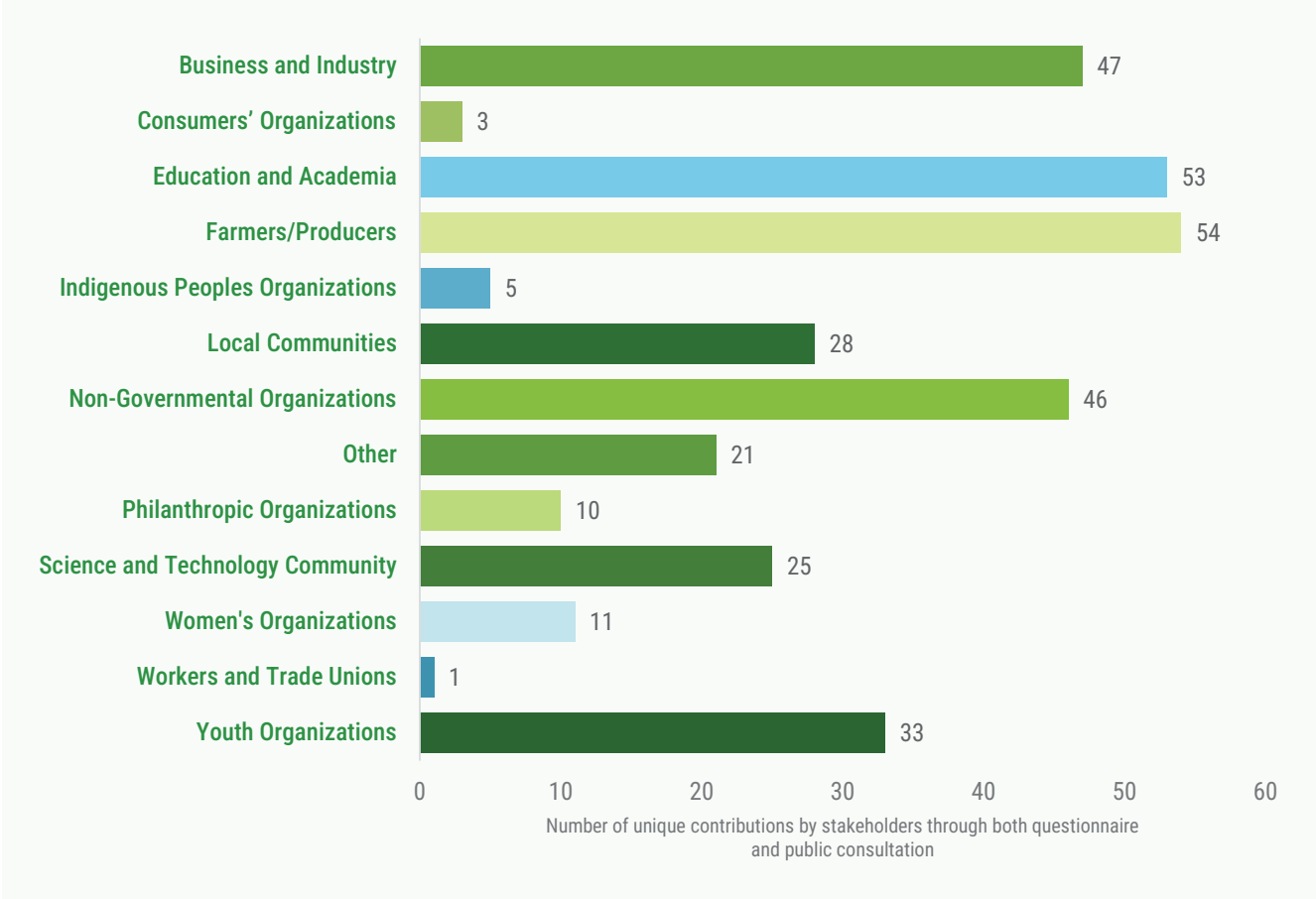
The ISR is based on the inputs received from stakeholders who self-identified under the following groups largely in alignment with the UN Major Groups categorization:[4]

- Business and Industry (private sector/for profit organizations)
- Consumers' Organizations
- Education and Academia
- Farmers/Producers (their organizations)
- Indigenous Peoples Organizations
- Local Communities
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Science and Technological Community
- Women's Organizations
- Workers and Trade Unions
- Youth

4 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos

FIGURE 2

Stakeholder submissions to the UNFSS+4 Independent Stakeholders' Report, through the open questionnaire, public consultation and direct email



Methodological note

The data analysis combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Responses were carefully reviewed and categorized into thematic areas, followed by a cross-sectoral analysis to identify common challenges, enabling factors and overarching recommendations. For analytical purposes, inputs from a wide range of stakeholders - including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Philanthropic Organizations, Youth groups, Women's and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, and local communities - are often grouped under the term Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): despite their diverse mandates and areas of focus, these actors showed a strong convergence of views on key dimensions of food systems transformation, particularly emphasizing inclusivity, grassroots participation, and the localization of solutions. This grouping allows for the identification of shared priorities and collective calls to action. At the same time, the report ensures that the distinct perspectives of specific groups, particularly Youth, Women's organizations,

and representatives of Indigenous Peoples are strongly reflected, considering that their voices are critical, but often underrepresented in decision-making processes related to food systems.

While the questionnaire aimed to reach all stakeholder categories, participation levels varied. Notably, consumer organizations and trade unions were largely absent among the contributors, limiting comparative insights across all stakeholder groups. Additionally, while some responses were brief or lacked contextual depth, all contributions, regardless of format or detail, were analyzed and integrated to the fullest extent possible where meaningful insights could be drawn.

Responses from public authorities, state-owned enterprises, and intergovernmental organizations were excluded from the analysis to maintain a focus on independent, non-state perspectives. Throughout the process, the analysis was guided by principles of inclusivity and transparency with a commitment to reflect the diverse voices of all stakeholders.

2.1 WHAT HAS CHANGED: COMPARISON BETWEEN 2023 AND 2025

Actions reported by stakeholders in support of food systems transformation

Stakeholders' reported actions contributing to food systems transformation have continued to evolve since 2023:

- Capacity building remains a priority. In 2023 24 percent of organizations highlighted undertaking actions in this area, while in 2025 34 percent reported their involvement. The areas of focus have also evolved. In 2023 it was noted that the training was on sustainable agriculture and livelihood-enhancing activities. In 2025 the focus was increasingly on participatory governance.
- 25 percent of respondents in 2025 reported their involvement in advocacy efforts, compared to 16 percent in 2023. In their advocacy efforts, stakeholders increasingly emphasized the need for inclusive spaces and stronger accountability mechanisms.
- Actions implementing sustainable food systems initiatives have also seen an increase from 9 percent in 2023 to 25 percent in 2025. The specific areas of focus by and large remain climate-smart agriculture, agri-processing, waste reduction and clean technology. Although there is now a greater focus on their implementation within integrated frameworks.
- Resource mobilization activities have also increased from being carried out by 2 percent of respondents in 2023 to 11 percent in 2025.

In 2023 the overall narrative which emerged on food systems transformation was one of technological innovation, private sector–driven solutions and environmental, social and governance (ESG) oriented practices (including digitalization, climate-smart agriculture and efficiency gains). There was a notable shift in 2025, with greater input provided by stakeholders on civil society led food systems transformation including community-led initiatives rooted in local governance and mutual accountability; re-establishment and protection of traditional and territorial food practices; and rights-based approaches to food access, land tenure and participation. The narrative has changed

from optimizing existing systems to challenging structural power imbalances and reasserting the role of communities in shaping food system futures, with civil society more clearly aligned on food systems transformation objectives.

Collaborations

Stakeholder collaboration has deepened since 2023. The 2023 report discussed findings that were largely based on bilateral cooperation. In 2025 multistakeholder coalition and platforms were more highly reported, suggesting that cross-sectoral efforts have become more institutionalized. However, these platforms are often criticized for their limited impact and unclear mandates. There was also increased reporting on the activities above being part of co-designed mechanisms, joint monitoring frameworks, and cross-sectoral planning tools.

Compared to 2023, Education and Academia stakeholders appear more actively involved in co-developing participatory monitoring frameworks, impact assessment tools and data systems. However, respondents also note a limited connection between research outputs and policymaking.

Challenges

Many of the challenges identified in 2023 persist in 2025, including:

- **Marginalization of specific groups** and the exclusion of Youth, Women, Indigenous Peoples and small-scale Producers from decision-making spaces. In addition, the 2025 report reflects a growing skepticism towards high-level processes especially when these are perceived as symbolic or lacking concrete follow-up. Yet in this 2025 report, some examples also point to emerging models of shared governance at the community level.
- **Lack of coherence and alignment across governance levels**, although the focus has shifted from looking at alignment between UN agencies to alignment more generally between food systems and other global policy frameworks (with national climate objectives specifically and repeatedly discussed).
- **Limited funding and restricted access to credit** are now compounded by a growing misalignment between donor priorities and community needs, leading to calls for inclusive investment frameworks
- **Top-down processes and a lack of participatory approaches** in national pathway design and implementation. Many stakeholders continue to describe multistakeholder processes as performative, with no mechanisms for follow-up or accountability. A lack of common metrics and transparency in tracking financial flows is highlighted by stakeholders now more explicitly than in 2023.

In 2023, private sector stakeholders expressed concern over the lack of clear mechanisms for their engagement in national pathway development and implementation. By 2025, however, other stakeholders raised concerns about imbalances in influence among stakeholders, with some respondents highlighting the disproportionate visibility of powerful lobbies or large actors in key decision-making processes. In 2023 it was reported that some governments were hesitant to act on scientific evidence. However, this was not reiterated in 2025.

Priorities

Compared to 2023, there is a stronger focus in the inputs received in 2025 on how to concretely align food systems transformation efforts with global frameworks. For example, several new elements emerge that were absent or only vaguely mentioned in 2023,includingdiscussions on global financial instruments (such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund as mechanisms to channel investments toward food systems transformation), as well as the Food-water-climate nexus and the need for alignment with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, One Health Agenda, climate action, under the framework of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). There is also a notable enhanced focus on accountability, monitoring and mutual obligations – highlighting perhaps a persistent gap between discourse and action. Stakeholders in 2025 are additionally strongly calling for rights-based co-governance (not just participation), embedding formal roles for marginalized groups in decision making processes, clear accountability mechanisms, and safeguards against power imbalances.

Role of the UNFSS+4 compared to UNFSS+2

In 2023, stakeholders widely recognized UNFSS+2 as a platform for visibility, learning and knowledge exchange. They sought inclusive discussions and expected a showcase of scalable solutions and good practices. For 2025, expectations have grown in scope and strategic ambition. Stakeholders are calling for more robust monitoring, transparency, and concrete accountability frameworks, urging the Stocktake to assess real progress and enforce national commitments. They are also seeking for the institutionalization of participation—especially for Women and Youth—through formal governance roles, financing mechanisms, and intergenerational equity strategies and rights-based approach to food systems transformation. They expect the UNFSS+4 to enhance policy and financing alignment across national, regional and global levels (e.g. SDGs, NDCs, COP30), positioning food systems within broader development and sustainability frameworks.

↓ **El Salvador – At 22, Nubia Fuentes is a youth leader and community promoter supporting sustainable soil management, contributing to more resilient and climate-smart food systems.**
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CHAPTER 2

REFLECTING ON THE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS

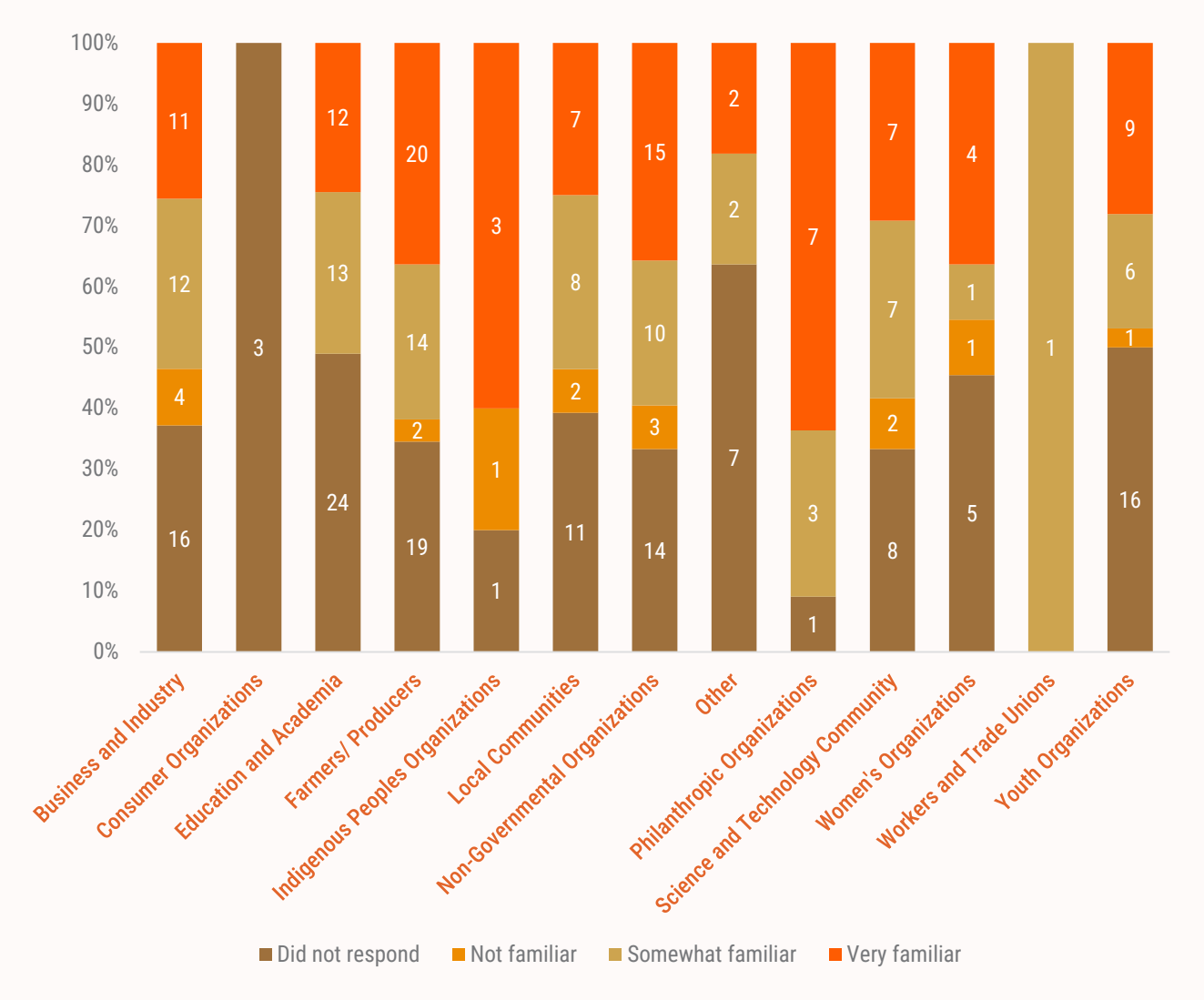
The first part of this chapter focuses on the inclusivity and alignment of national food systems transformation pathways (or similar plans) with stakeholders' values and objectives. It explores how aware of and engaged stakeholders have been in the implementation of national pathways or other food systems transformation efforts at different levels (local, national, regional or global). It also highlights stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of governance and coordination mechanisms for engaging them, as well as their views on the progress made in implementing national food systems transformation pathways. The second part of the chapter explores the persisting challenges stakeholders face in effectively engaging with other food systems actors and their recommendations for improving engagement in national, regional or global food systems transformation efforts.

2.1 INCLUSIVITY AND ALIGNMENT OF FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PATHWAYS AND OTHER EFFORTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS' VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

Stakeholders were asked about their familiarity with national pathways documents or similar plans as a proxy for their level of engagement in national food systems transformation efforts. Stakeholders from across all five regions reported a **moderate to high level of familiarity with their country's national food systems transformation pathway (or similar plan)**. While a **significant portion (40 percent) did not provide an answer** - suggesting a possible gap in awareness or engagement - **the majority of the respondents, 55 percent, indicated that they were either somewhat or very familiar with national plans and processes related to food systems transformation.**

FIGURE 3

Degree of familiarity with national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan)

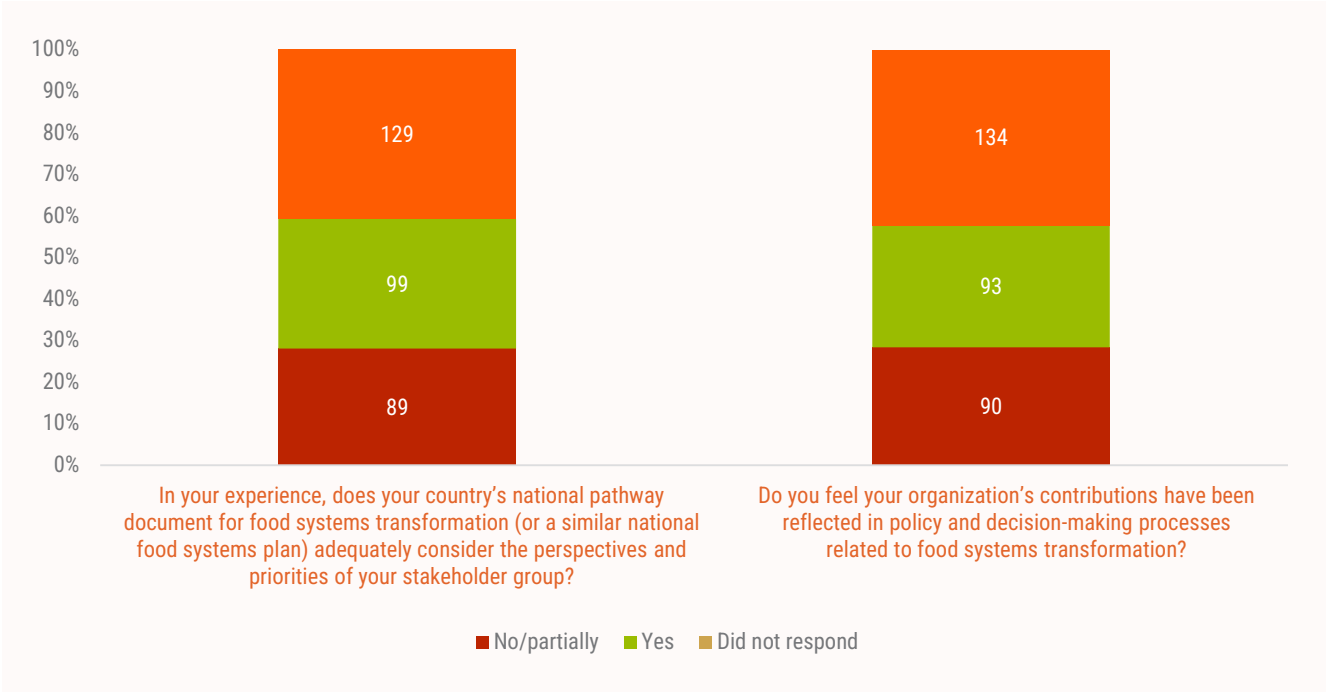


Note: This figure illustrates how familiar each stakeholder group is with their country's national pathway for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan). The y-axis represents the percentage distribution of responses across four familiarity levels: Very familiar, Somewhat familiar, Not familiar, and Did not respond. Each bar corresponds to a stakeholder group, with the height of each colored segment indicating the proportion of responses in each category. The numbers within the segments show the actual number of respondents.

When it came to the question of **whether the pathway or similar national plan *adequately considered the perspectives and priorities of their stakeholder group*,** *31 percent responded affirmatively*, while a quarter (28 percent) expressed that their views were only *partially or not all reflected. A significant share* - 41 percent - *did not answer this question*. While some stakeholders offered positive examples of inclusive and targeted approaches to addressing stakeholder priorities within the plans, this points to a certain level of misalignment of national pathways with stakeholder priorities.

FIGURE 4

Perceived inclusivity of national pathways or similar food systems transformation plans



Note: This figure presents responses from all stakeholder groups to two questions on the perceived inclusivity of national food systems pathways (or similar documents). The y-axis shows the percentage distribution of responses across three categories: Yes, No/Partially, and Did not respond. Each bar represents one of the two questions, with the height of each colored segment indicating the proportion of responses in each category. The numbers within the segments reflect the actual number of respondents.

Furthermore, ***only 29 percent of respondents reported that their organization's contributions to food systems transformation policy have been consistently considered***, while 29 percent stated that their inputs had either been not reflected or only partially so. *A significant share (42 percent) did not respond to this question*—possibly indicating that they had not engaged in national pathways to a degree that would allow them to assess whether their views were incorporated.

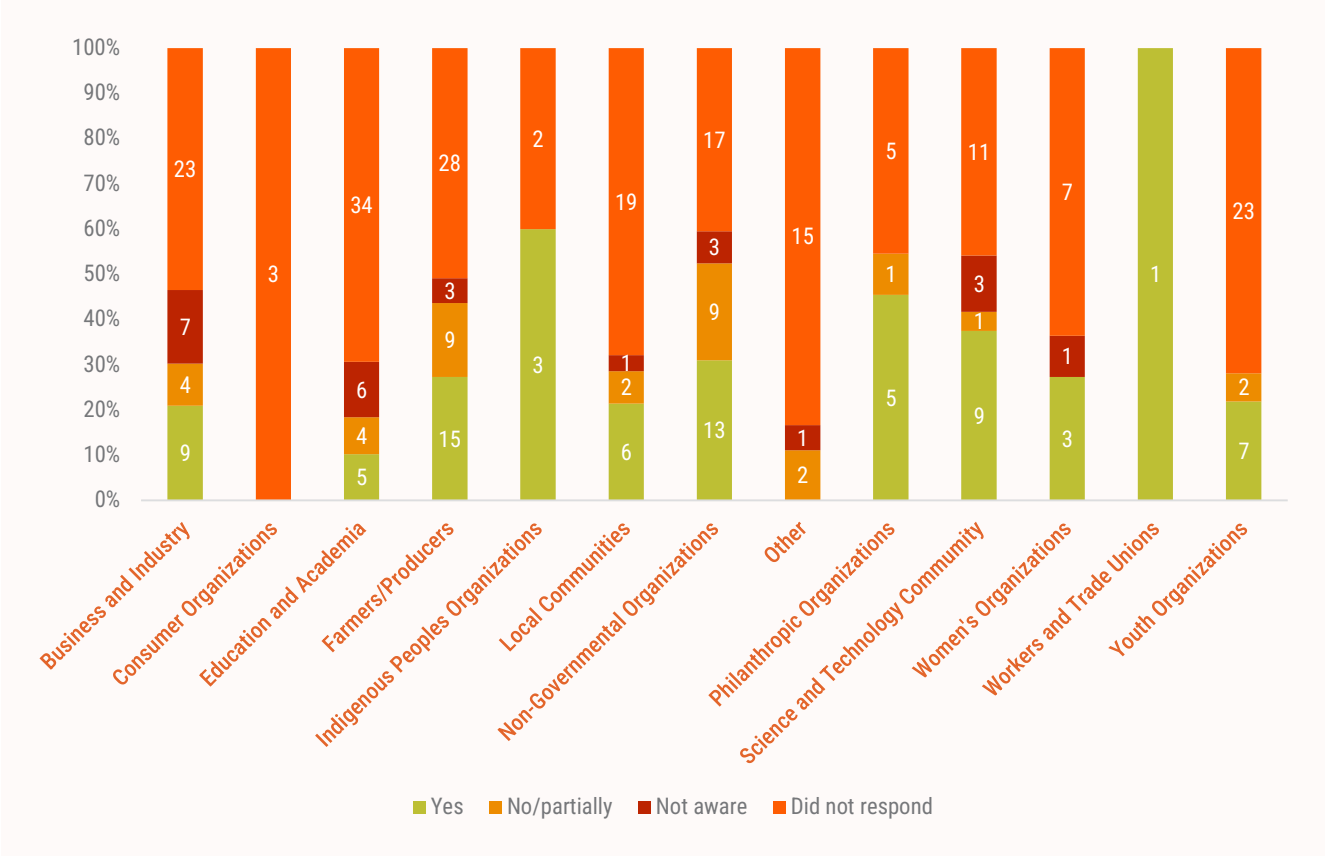
Perceived alignment of national pathways with stakeholders' values and objectives

A substantial portion (58 percent) did not provide a response to the related question,[5] indicating a potential lack of knowledge regarding the details of the strategic documents in question. Among those who did respond, **24 percent reported that they felt the national directives were fully aligned with stakeholders' values and objectives**. However, another segment, representing 10 percent, expressed partial or total disagreement. A non-negligible percentage of respondents, 8 percent, indicated that they were not aware of the contents of the national pathway or an equivalent national plan.

5 Do you/your organization agree with the values and objectives outlined in your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan)?

FIGURE 5

Agreement with the values and objectives of the national pathway or similar food systems transformation plan



Note: This figure illustrates how different stakeholder groups responded to the question of whether they agree with the values and objectives outlined in their country's national food systems pathway (or similar plan). The y-axis represents the percentage distribution of responses across four categories: *Yes*, *No/Partially*, *Not aware*, and *Did not respond*. Each bar corresponds to a stakeholder group, with the height of each colored segment indicating the proportion of that group's responses in each category. The numbers inside the segments show the actual number of respondents.

Farmers and Producers noted a perceived misalignment between the stated policy objectives and the actual needs and realities of their stakeholder group. For instance, the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) emphasized that while they partially agree with the objectives of relevant strategies, key elements such as improving farmers' and fishers' income, soil and water health, and promoting agrobiodiversity, including neglected and underutilized species, are not sufficiently emphasized in the national pathway documents of the region. This misalignment is echoed by the World Future Council which highlights that while there are ongoing negotiations with governmental bodies, and the objectives of *Nepal's Food Systems Strategic Plan* aligns with agroecological transformation, certain aspects of its operational framework require further refinement to fully meet the needs of the Farmers and Producers. Also, the absence of a bottom-up, community-led approach was highlighted, including the integration of human rights, gender responsiveness and local leadership, alongside the need for technical and budgetary support mechanisms better aligned with local contexts and actors, which suggests areas for potential policy refinement Overall, the responses from Farmers and Producers reveal a desire for more targeted, locally

responsive pathways and other strategies that reflect the specific socio-economic and environmental contexts of agricultural communities.

Among **Civil Society Organizations**, a recurring concern is the absence of a structured national pathway document, or one which is poorly articulated, which makes it challenging for stakeholders to align their efforts with a framework. This gap complicates the ability of these organizations to effectively contribute to the national food systems transformation process. A programme manager from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany), who also serves as Youth Policy Board member of the World Food Forum, highlighted that awareness of national food systems strategies remains limited among grassroots actors, especially outside academic and urban areas. The same person pointed out that while principles such as sustainability and equity are often referenced in national frameworks, inclusive implementation mechanisms are largely missing.

Additionally, Consumer Organizations raised concerns about the absence of consumer-centric approaches within existing frameworks. They point to a lack of emphasis on consumer behavior as a lever for systemic change, underscoring the need for more inclusive and transformative strategies that integrate consumption patterns into the broader food systems agenda.

For instance, **Non-Governmental Organizations** found that the urgency of reducing and gradually eliminating the consumption of meat and dairy to restore humanity's "*safe operating space*" within planetary boundaries is often missing from pathways or similar strategies as well as a strategic shift towards agroecological frameworks and operationalizing agroecology as a guiding approach within national pathways. This call for an agroecological approach is echoed by **Youth and Women groups**, which further emphasize the need for more inclusive national pathways. They advocate for strategies that not only adopt agroecological principles but also ensure the participation of grassroots voices, facilitate access for vulnerable groups, and are firmly rooted in human rights principles.

Representatives of **Indigenous Peoples** emphasized that ensuring meaningful inclusion requires placing Indigenous knowledge, and locally adapted solutions on equal footing with conventional research, institutionalizing co-decision mechanisms and creating space for long-term engagement through legal and financial support structures.

Although around one fifth of **Business and Industry** respondents indicated alignment with national food systems pathways, no detailed explanation was provided with further elaboration. This suggests the need for more targeted mechanisms to gather structured input in future processes.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS TO ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN NATIONAL PATHWAYS IMPLEMENTATION

Many stakeholders who perceived a lack of alignment expressed disappointment with what they described as superficial or symbolic consultation processes in the development and implementation of national food system transformation strategies. Stakeholders noted that engagement efforts often lacked genuine inclusivity and failed to establish clear mechanisms for implementing commitments. Several emphasized the absence of feedback loops or follow-up, making it difficult to assess whether their contributions were meaningfully considered. This sentiment emerged across multiple stakeholder groups, including Youth, Women, Farmers/Producers, Indigenous Peoples' communities and Business and Industry, revealing recurring patterns of exclusion and underrepresentation.

Women, Youth and informal sector workers, in particular, reported an underrepresentation in decision-making processes and, consequently, limited structural influence on national food systems policies despite their critical roles in food systems. For Youth, the disconnect was particularly pronounced, with many respondents noting an absence of government initiatives to actively engage Youth in the creation and implementation of national food system plans. As documented in the UNFSS+4 regional consultations[6], Youth representatives describe being excluded from budget discussions, legislative development and policy implementation, particularly in key areas such as land governance, agricultural extension and public investment.

Several interventions point out that the lack of meaningful inclusion is perceived not as a technical oversight but a matter of political will, calling for mechanisms that enable real joint decision-making. The exclusion of Youth not only silences a critical demographic group but also overlooks the potential of emerging leaders to drive sustainable practices and innovation within food systems.

> “YOUTH, IN PARTICULAR, ARE UNDERREPRESENTED IN POLICY FORMULATION DESPITE FORMING A LARGE PART OF THE POPULATION ENGAGED IN AGRITECH, FOOD INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

Key takeaways from the UNFSS+4 Preparatory Youth Conference

At the Preparatory Youth Conference for the UNFSS+4, held in Bangkok in May 2025,[1] Youth from over 50 countries highlighted a growing awareness of national food systems transformation pathways yet expressed concern over the disconnect between high-level policy frameworks and the lived realities of young people, particularly in marginalized communities. They also expressed deep concern over the superficial nature of participatory mechanisms. They reported that many youth engagements are consultative in name only, lacking meaningful follow-up, institutional feedback loops, or mechanisms to hold duty-bearers accountable for acting on youth-led recommendations. While many had taken part in national and regional consultations, they felt that their contributions were often absent from official outcomes. Participants, therefore, called for inclusive and transparent monitoring systems that track how youth inputs inform decision-making, along with disaggregated data collection that captures youth-specific challenges and innovations.

Participants proposed concrete accountability structures, such as formal youth advisory bodies embedded within national food systems governance institutions, periodic independent evaluations of youth inclusion and clear, time-bound commitments to intergenerational equity. They stressed the importance of upholding rights-based approaches and ensuring that Youth participation moves from symbolic presence to shared decision-making authority.

6 https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/member-state-dialogue/regional-progress-reviews/unfss-4-regional-preparatory-meetings/en

> WOMEN WORKERS FROM THE INFORMAL ECONOMY CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY AT ALL STAGES IN THE FOOD SYSTEM. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY ARE INVISIBLE AND UNREGISTERED.

Respondents representing **Women-led Workers' and Trade Union organizations** reported that pathway documents often failed to acknowledge the critical yet often invisible roles women play within food systems. They argue that this invisibility results in policy frameworks that fail to address the unique challenges faced by women, from limited access to mechanization to the lack of targeted support for women-led agricultural enterprises.

Small-scale Farmers, Producers and communities of Indigenous Peoples, including pastoralist communities particularly emphasized the lack of inclusion in national dialogues or access to decision-making processes. Some noted that while their contributions were acknowledged, policy frameworks were often perceived as favoring large-scale agricultural production over community-based approaches and overlooked key issues such as agroecology, permaculture, protection of grazing lands and the economic rights of pastoralist communities. This focus could undermine efforts to integrate local farming practices, agroecological approaches and provide for equitable access to resources such as land and water. Access to these critical resources was also perceived as being inadequately addressed in national strategies, therefore failing to tackle existing inequities in food systems. A survey respondent noted that his country's pathway document for food systems transformation *"didn't adequately capture indigenous food systems,"* describing a policy landscape biased towards monocropping and agri-commodities at the expense of traditional and local food crops. The resulting disconnect is seen to not only perpetuate food insecurity for marginalized populations but also erase culturally significant agricultural practices that could contribute to more resilient, diverse food systems. Overall, these communities often perceive themselves as underrepresented in national strategies, limiting the impact of their recommendations. Even when contributions were incorporated, many respondents highlighted challenges in the implementation phase. Barriers such as insufficient funding, weak coordination and limited political will were repeatedly cited as factors impeding effective follow-up on policy commitments or institutional uptake.

Structural fragmentation, lack of transparency and the prioritization of political interests over inclusive, rights-based approaches were also identified as weaknesses of national pathways and their implementation. Finally, some respondents expressed frustration over the gap between grassroots innovation and formal policy frameworks.

> A strong positive example of structured Indigenous Peoples' participation comes from the CFS Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism. Their involvement in the development of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Framework, as well as their contributions to the national dialogues ahead of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit in Kenya, illustrates what effective inclusion can look like.
>
> These processes included grassroots consultations, multistakeholder working groups, digital outreach tools, and transparent reporting mechanisms that allowed community input to shape final positions. Establishing follow-up task forces and participatory monitoring initiatives further helped bridge the gap between participation and policy implementation. This experience underscores the value of institutionalizing co-decision platforms, anchoring participation in legal frameworks, and investing in the engagement capacity of marginalized actors. Furthermore, it highlights the value of embedding inclusive mechanisms within legal frameworks ensuring that policy outcomes reflect the knowledge and priorities of Indigenous communities.

CSOs, including **Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Communities** also voiced concerns about being sidelined in decision-making processes. "*In general, NGOs have limited influence in defining the food systems pathways*," a respondent noted. Local communities highlighted a disconnect between the policy's goals and action in practice and a "*lack of sufficient consultation and representation during the formulation of these plans*." They pointed out that the lack of comprehensive stakeholder engagement can contribute to undermining the effectiveness of policy frameworks as well as potentially eroding trust among CSOs.

Beyond the exclusion of specific groups, respondents identified broader structural issues within national pathway documents. Many criticized the fragmented nature of these policies and noted significant gaps between planning and implementation, including neglecting crucial areas such as post-harvest systems, nutrition education and food waste reduction. Similarly, some pathways were referred to as *"in draft form and has not been finalized since 2021*," suggesting a broader pattern of policy inertia and lack of follow-through. Several respondents also expressed frustration at the lack of implementation and follow-up mechanisms following the initial development of pathway documents despite a very positive first step of elaborating a national pathway.

These stakeholder groups also noted a failure to address key policy areas of importance for their group. For example, the absence of policy measures to promote plant-based diets along with improving livestock production efficiency, animal health, welfare and feed practices as possible strategies aiming to reduce GHG emissions were highlighted as a missed opportunity.

Education and Academia and the Science and Technological Community often provide insights not only from their direct experiences but also from broader evidence gathered in their research. From their responses several key themes emerged: the exclusion of academic voices in government-led consultations, limited integration of human rights considerations in the UNFSS process and fragmented policy frameworks that fail to adequately include public health, civil society and small-scale food processing sectors. Additionally, the absence of cohesive national food strategies, and a lack of political will and funding for effective implementation were highlighted as persistent challenges. They also expressed concern about the operationalization of national pathways. While acknowledging

alignment with values like sustainability, health, and equity, they noted the absence of concrete strategies to implement them. Their critique focused on structural barriers, such as commercial influence, power imbalances, and weak governance, that hinder effective policy alignment and resource allocation. Additionally, there is a shared concern about the exclusion of young professionals, community innovators and interdisciplinary solutions, which have been identified as critical gaps in the operationalization of food systems transformation strategies.

Respondents from **Business and Industry,** as well as a non-profit business advocacy organization, across the value chain consistently emphasized their limited engagement in shaping national food systems pathways, both in terms of direct participation in decision-making processes and in the consideration of their operational needs and strategic contributions. Tetra Pak draws attention to the *'hidden middle'*, the intermediary stages between farm-gate and retail - processing, storage, logistics and packaging - which represent 30-40 percent of value and costs in food systems, which is often neglected in policy frameworks focused primarily on production and retail.

The exclusion of specific themes and innovative approaches was another recurrent issue also for the **Science and Technology Community**. In particular, technology integration is seen as disjointed and superficial, with particular criticism for the failure to better integrate digital solutions as a core component of food systems transformation.

> "TECHNOLOGY IS OFTEN LOOKED AT IN A SILO FROM THE PRACTICES THEY SUPPORT.

Overall, the responses reveal a landscape of partial and selective representation, where certain groups and thematic areas are either inadequately addressed or entirely overlooked. Addressing these gaps would require more inclusive, integrated and sustained approaches to stakeholder consultation within the national food systems transformation planning and implementation, ensuring that all stakeholders, especially those historically marginalized, are meaningfully engaged throughout the policy development process.

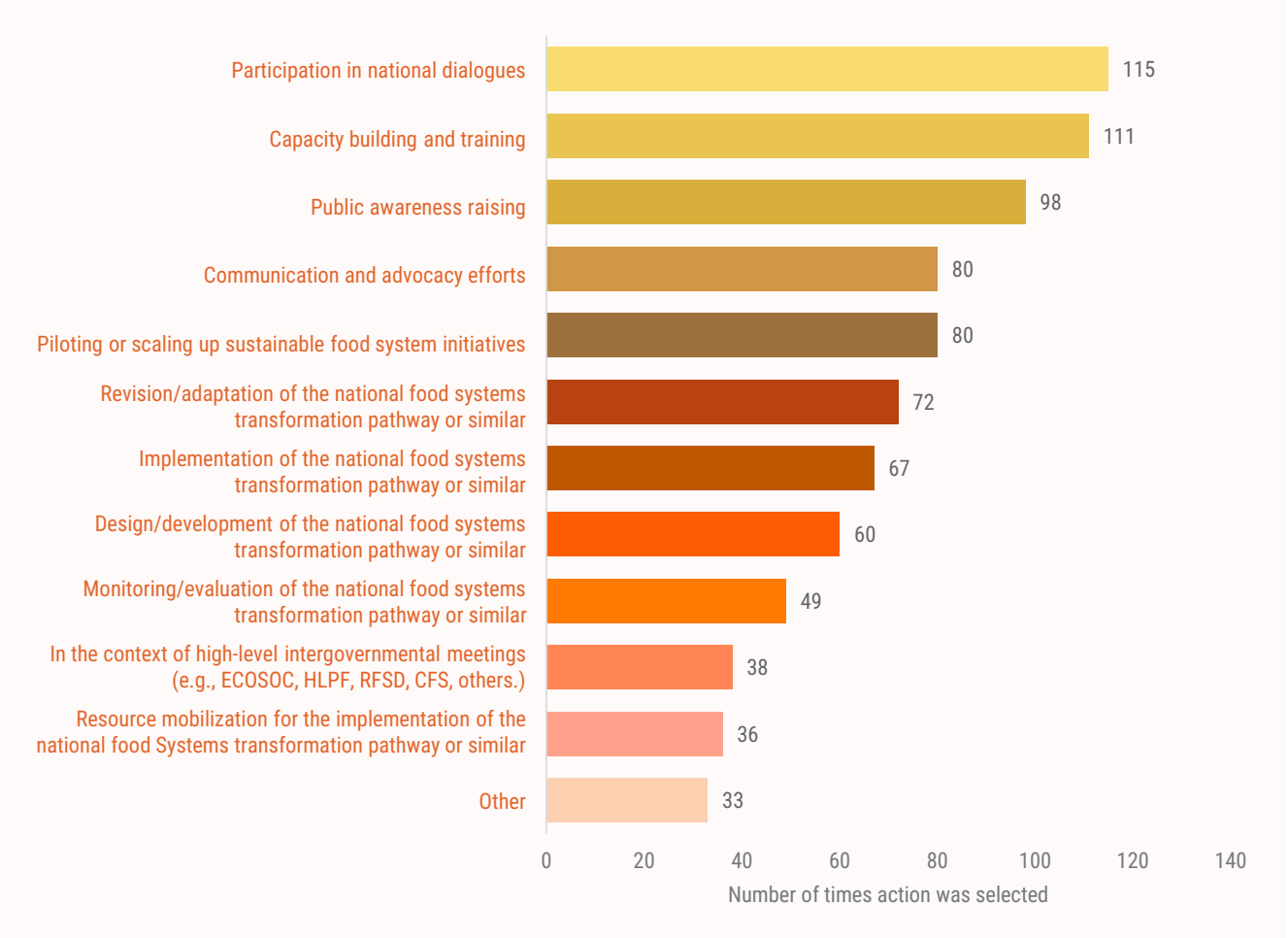
Forms of engagement

According to the questionnaire, the most common forms of engagement in national food systems pathways over the past four years have centred around participation in national dialogues (35 percent), capacity building and training (34 percent), and public awareness raising (30 percent) and other advocacy efforts (24 percent).[7]

7 As this was a multiple-choice question, respondents could select more than one engagement activity. The percentages reported below therefore reflect the share of total respondents (n=321) who indicated involvement in each area and are not meant to sum to 100%.

FIGURE 6

Forms of engagement by stakeholders in the implementation of national pathways for food systems transformation (or similar national food systems plans)



Note: This figure illustrates the different ways stakeholders reported being engaged in the implementation of their country's national pathway for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan). The x-axis shows the total number of times each engagement option was selected. Stakeholders could select multiple options to reflect the full range of their activities.

Being engaged in implementation of national pathways or similar plans and piloting sustainable food system initiatives was reported by 21 percent and 25 percent of respondents respectively. However, direct engagement in the core processes of monitoring, evaluation and policy design of national pathways remains more limited, as reflected by lower participation rates (15 percent for monitoring and 19 percent for policy design). Nonetheless, a noteworthy example comes from an international research organization within the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system, with a country office in Ethiopia, which contributed to the development of monitoring indicators for the national food systems plan. This example provides a model for how global research institutions, locally engaged, can effectively collaborate with national stakeholders to bridge the gap between policy design and implementation.

At the lower end of the spectrum, only 12 percent of respondents were involved in high-level intergovernmental meetings such as UN Economic and Social Council events, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and Committee on World Food Security's (CFS) events, highlighting potential difficulties for stakeholders to attend such meetings. This limited access could hinder alignment between national and global policy processes, potentially affecting the flow of information and the integration of local perspectives into broader global frameworks.

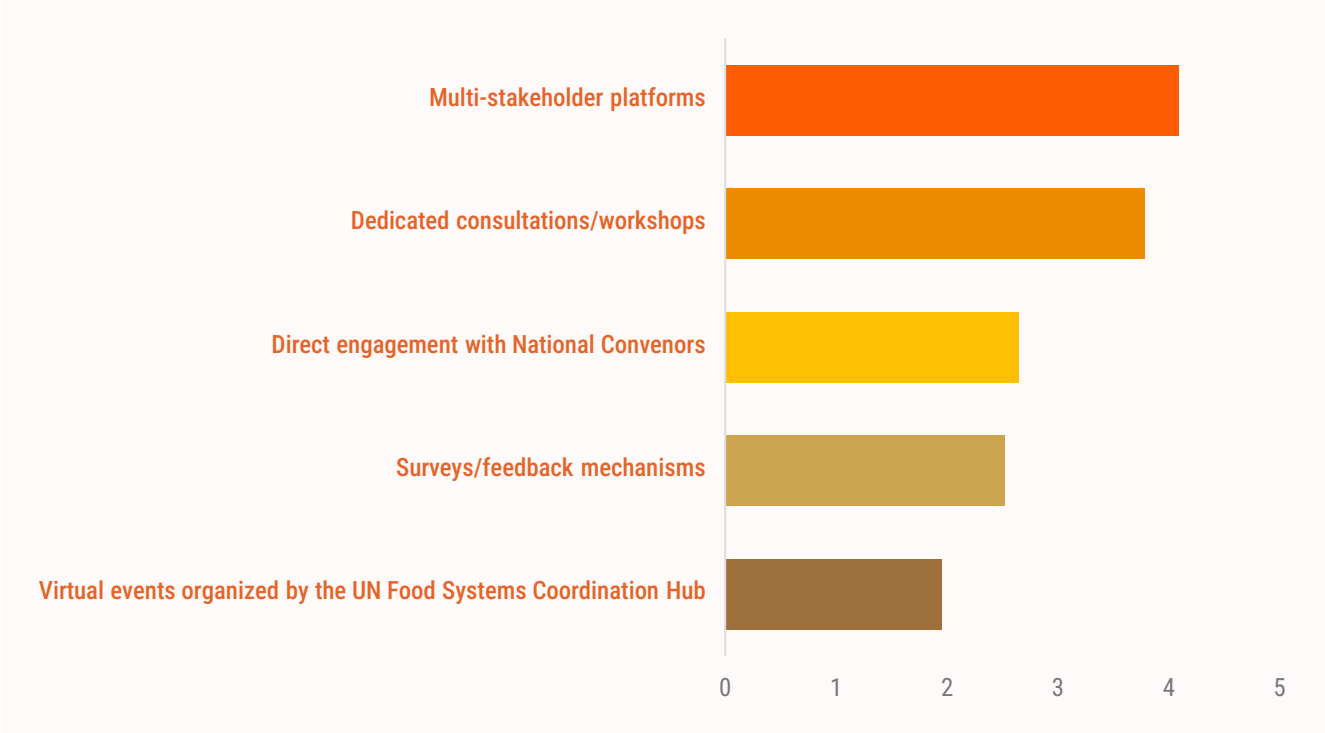
Engagement in resource mobilization for national pathway implementation was equally low, with 11 percent of survey respondents stating they were involved in this area. This suggests that funding and financial planning may be underdeveloped areas within the broader food systems transformation agenda.

Channels of engagement

Engagement with national food system pathways and the UNFSS process takes place through a variety of channels, including national dialogues, multistakeholder platforms, technical working groups and regional or global events. However, the perceived effectiveness of these mechanisms varied.

FIGURE 7

Most effective engagement channels for food systems transformation



Note: This figure presents the average scores received by different engagement channels based on stakeholder responses to a question asking to rank the most effective channels for engaging in food systems transformation. Each channel's score is calculated as a weighted average of its rankings across all responses. A score of 5 would mean all respondents ranked the channel as most effective. A score of 1 would mean all respondents ranked it as least effective.

When asked to rank the most effective channels for engaging in food systems transformation, respondents showed a clear preference for **multistakeholder platforms, which received the highest share of top scores**: over 41 percent of those who answered the question rated them as either the most (27.8 percent) or second most (13.9 percent) effective channel. This suggests that, despite some reported challenges, these platforms are widely perceived as meaningful spaces for dialogue and collaboration. Respondents highlighted their role as formal structures that bring together governments, the private sector and CSOs to advance collective action—through mechanisms such as multistakeholder dialogues, conferences, and targeted policy roundtables.

Dedicated consultations and workshops, including training sessions and working groups, followed closely behind, with 35.8 percent of respondents rating them as either highly or moderately effective (11.9 percent ranked them first and 23.8 percent second). These formats appear to offer tangible opportunities for interaction, capacity building and co-creation.

Direct engagement with National Convenors received a more mixed response, with 16.2 percent of respondents giving it a top score, while a higher proportion assigned mid to low effectiveness ratings (from third to fifth position). Nonetheless, many respondents emphasized the value of direct interactions with government representatives, regional stakeholders and academic institutions, particularly for in-depth learning and follow-up action.

Surveys and feedback mechanisms were rated as highly effective by only 7.6 percent of respondents, suggesting that while these tools are important for consultation, they may be perceived as more passive forms of engagement with limited influence on decision-making.

Finally, virtual events organized by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, while useful for staying informed about global processes, were seen as one of the least impactful channels for tangible engagement: only 9.3 percent of respondents ranked them in first or second position, while nearly 29 percent assigned the lowest possible score. As one respondent from Belgian academia noted, these events are particularly useful for "*keeping up with global processes,*" though often perceived as "*less impactful than multistakeholder platforms in terms of national implementation*."

Indeed, the perceived effectiveness of engagement mechanisms appears to be stratified along two primary axes: accessibility and information dissemination, on one hand, and action-oriented dialogue and policy impact, on the other. Within this framework, Hub virtual events align more closely with the first axis, serving as platforms for knowledge sharing, networking and global process monitoring.

Conversely, mechanisms such as Barazas and the CFS Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) are positioned along the second axis, functioning as structured spaces for localized or sector-specific dialogue. Barazas are African community platforms, serving as a space for dialogue and consultation among local actors on food systems challenges. The PSM integrates the private sector into broader policy discussions through hybrid engagement modalities, combining virtual and in-person interactions.

Similarly, National Food Systems Technical Working Groups, established in several countries as part of the UNFSS follow-up, are designed to operate as cross-sectoral policy dialogue spaces, facilitating both information sharing and action-oriented coordination.

At the same time, networks such as CGIAR and strategic hubs like the one linked to the implementation of MIDORI (Japan's Strategy for Sustainable Food Systems), occupy a distinct position within the ecosystem of food systems transformation: they play a significant role in research dissemination and strategic analysis, informing broader policy discussions at the global level and reinforcing the knowledge sharing function associated with virtual events.

FIGURE 8

Other engagement channels noted for their effectiveness

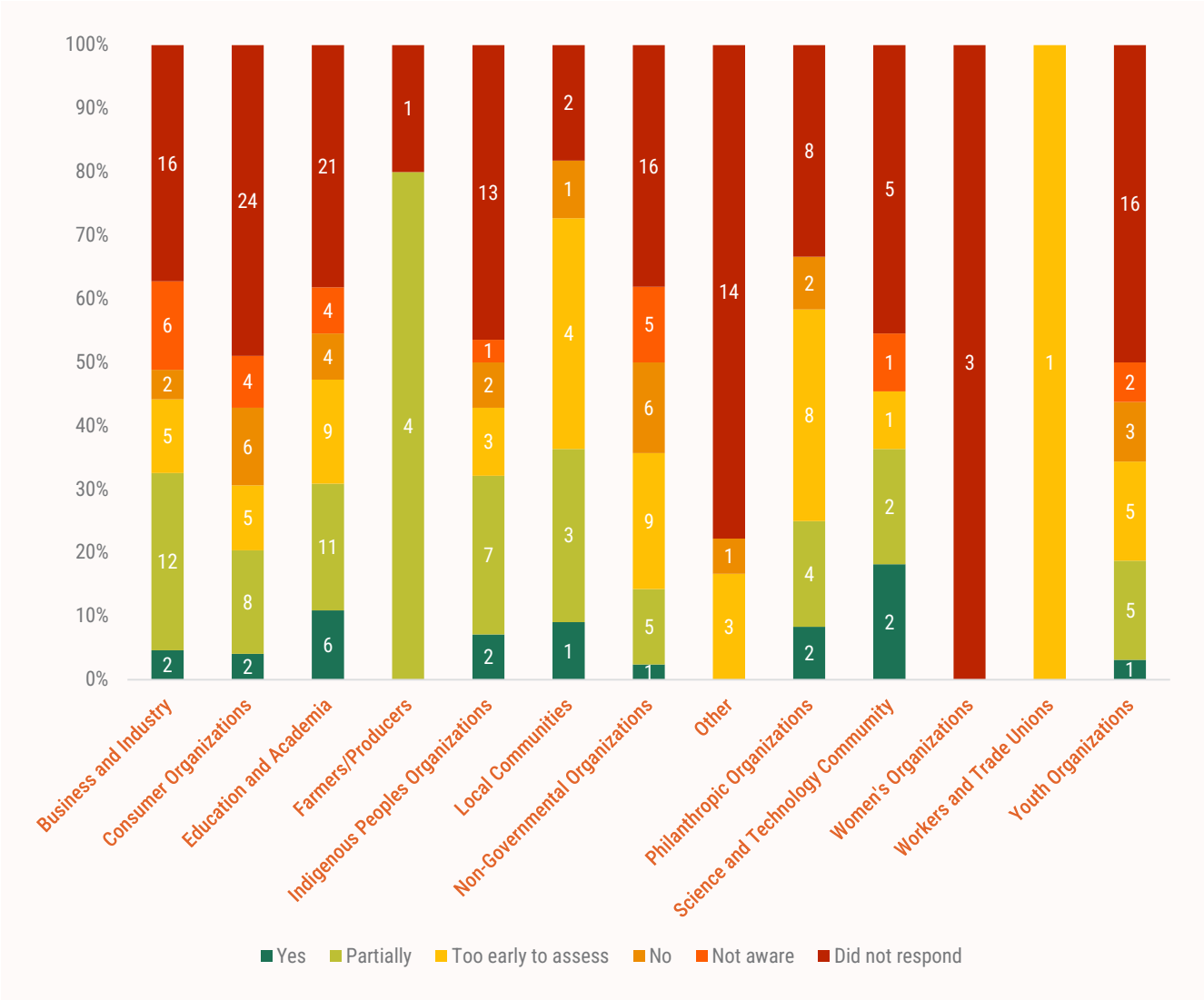


2.3 PERCEIVED PROGRESS TOWARDS FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION BY STAKEHOLDERS

When asked whether the implementation of their country's national food systems transformation pathway (or a similar plan) is achieving the expected results, **over 40 percent of the survey respondents did not provide a response**. However, **of those who did respond, 43 percent believe their country is either on track (10 percent) or partially on track (33 percent) to achieve the planned results.** Comparably only 15 percent consider the implementation to be falling short of expectations and another 29 percent indicate that it is still too early to assess tangible outcomes. A further 13 percent indicate they are either unaware of the implementation status or do not hold a clear opinion.

FIGURE 9

Perception of implementation of national pathways



Note: This figure illustrates how different stakeholder groups perceive progress on the implementation of national food systems pathways (or similar plans). The y-axis represents the percentage distribution of responses across six categories: *Yes*, *Partially*, *Too early to assess*, *No*, *Not aware*, and *Did not respond*. Each bar corresponds to a stakeholder group, and the height of each colored segment reflects the proportion of that group's responses falling into each category. The numbers inside the segments indicate the actual number of respondents.

Several respondents attributed the shortcomings in the implementation of national food systems pathways to a lack of integration with existing national policies and the absence of specific measures targeting food systems transformation. Others pointed to structural challenges such as political instability, fragmented governance and poor intersectoral coordination which result in a disconnect between stated policy goals and actual outcomes.

Country-specific examples further illustrate these issues. In Uganda, barriers such as limited mechanization, unharmonized policies and weak statistical data systems were reported to hinder effective implementation.

Similarly, in Nigeria, political instability, climate shocks and rising food prices are seen to compound the difficulties in achieving national pathway goals. Some respondents underscored the urgency of aligning national pathways with evolving ground realities. For example, in Myanmar, where poverty rates have reportedly increased since 2022, alongside a decline in dietary diversity among women, the need for more inclusive, multisectoral approaches that incorporate civil society and local inputs while addressing emerging socio-economic challenges was emphasized.

Additionally, some respondents stressed the need for more effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. Discussions and meetings are often seen as repetitive and unproductive, while current frameworks are described as aspirational rather than operational, lacking binding commitments and clear, transparent implementation plans.

Others stressed the persistent financing bottlenecks preventing the effective implementation of national pathways. In their view, the current fiscal and financing models fail to uphold equity and accountability, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining transformative efforts.

Despite the challenges reported, several specific actions and initiatives were identified as working effectively. These include a growing familiarity with national pathways, with efforts underway to integrate pathway objectives into sectoral plans, as well as strengthen collaboration around sustainable food systems initiatives. Capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts are also ongoing, including training programmes targeting key actors within food systems at national and subnational levels.

Some notable concrete examples of progress reported:

- Ethiopia: Food Based Dietary Guidelines (initially developed through the Agriculture for Nutrition and Health project) are now being piloted at subnational levels, serving as a key component for food systems transformation.
- United States of America: The national pathway is being actively implemented through investments in climate-smart partnerships, digital tools for nutrient management and conservation practices, with a particular emphasis on regenerative agriculture.
- Kenya: Policy alignment with global frameworks is underway, with efforts focused on agricultural productivity and food security programmes.
- Cameroon: The national food systems pathway is now aligned with the National Investment Plan for Agriculture (2020-2030) and the National Development Strategy, signaling a stronger integration of food systems transformation into broader policy frameworks.
- Promising national policies supporting food recovery efforts: in France, legislation bans the destruction of edible food and mandates donation agreements; in Peru, a 2016 food donation law tripled donations to food banks; and in South Korea, a new government strategy has led to the diversion of 96 percent of food waste from landfills.

Examples of progress in food systems governance for Indigenous Peoples

During the Asia-Pacific UNFSS+4 Regional Preparatory Meeting, representatives of Indigenous Peoples highlighted positive developments at the global level, including the launch of the Indigenous Peoples' Coalition. This initiative includes representatives from the seven socio-cultural regions and various UN agencies, including FAO, IFAD, WFP, UNESCO and UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), along with 14 participating countries from Africa, Europe, Latin America and Oceania. Additionally, the 2024 flagship report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (of the CFS), with its focus on preserving, strengthening and promoting Indigenous Peoples' food systems, knowledge and traditional practices is seen as a sign of increasing institutional recognition. Stakeholders stressed that such global actions must however be translated into concrete national and regional policies and investments.

2.3.1 Positive actions by stakeholders to support the implementation of national pathways

Stakeholders were also asked how they have contributed to food systems transformation efforts and what results they have achieved. The reported positive contributions can be grouped into seven broad areas of activity: i) co-creation of policy plans and technical advising; ii) scaling up agroecological and resilient farming practices; iii) joining multistakeholder platforms; iv) delivering education and awareness-raising programmes; v) strengthening community support and social inclusion; vi) piloting technological innovations for sustainability and vii) capacity development.

- Stakeholders have played diverse roles in advancing national food systems pathways, ranging from rights-based advocacy to the **co-creation of policy plans and providing technical advise**. For instance, the Kenyan Right to Food Coalition successfully advocated for integrating right-to-food principles into the country's Universal Periodic Review; in Vietnam, sustainable school meal programmes were piloted in Dong Thap and Son La provinces; and in Tanzania, Colombia, and Brazil, non-state actors supported governments in shaping agroecology policies.
- Stakeholders have supported **agroecology and resilient farming** through activities such as workshops on soil conservation, integrated pest management, and post-harvest handling; distribution of drought-tolerant seeds; and integrated human

The **Action Agenda on Regenerative Landscapes**, launched by the COP28 Presidency, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), with support from the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions, is an example of a private sector led model of *multistakeholder* action on regenerative agriculture at landscape level: 35+ organizations, including companies such as Pepsico, OCP Group and Olam Agri, as well as partners such as TechnoServe, the Nature Conservancy and the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO), committed $6 billion of investments in landscape transitions by 2030, reaching 8.7 million farmers over 280 million ha across 110 geographies globally.

rights and nutrition programmes. Efforts to promote climate-resilient agriculture are also reflected, for example, in the work of an international non-profit agricultural research and development organization which scales up climate-smart practices, like drought-tolerant maize and conservation agriculture, across Africa, South Asia and Latin America, using cross-country learning exchanges to share best practices.

- **Multistakeholder engagement** efforts included partnerships with UN agencies such as FAO and WFP, and GIZ (the German Agency for International Cooperation), to support Nepal's mid-day meal programme, which currently provides meals to over 13,000 children. Other initiatives were led by farmers and civil society, including the Village Farmers Initiative (VFI) and the LIFT Network (Leadership Initiative for Fellowship and Transformation) in Nigeria. These initiatives have supported more than 2,000 farmers, promoted gender-inclusive policies, and amplified farmer voices at the 2025 Nutrition for Growth Summit. Similarly, the NGO Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) engages with multistakeholder platforms to promote best practices for sustainable food systems in Lesotho. On the business side Tetra Pak reported collaborating with FAO in Colombia on dairy sector-development projects.

- Survey responses highlighted various **education and awareness-raising initiatives** led by stakeholders, including school-based nutrition modules in India, school gardens in Nigeria and train-the-trainer courses on seed management, fertilizer use and post-harvest techniques. They have contributed through capacity building, knowledge sharing and advocacy by organizing and supporting workshops, conferences and training sessions to strengthen stakeholder capacities and foster a shared vision for sustainable food systems. For example, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Network played a significant role in the lead-up to the Nutrition for Growth Summit, facilitating dialogues to elevate nutrition in the food systems transformation agenda and coordinating stakeholder engagement to align policy recommendations. Among the few responses that explicitly addressed human rights in food systems, the contribution from the People-Centered Food Systems stands out for its emphasis on rights-based policy engagement. This consortium of four organizations (the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Columbia Climate School, the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, and Rikolto) contributed by training duty bearers and rights holders on food systems-related human rights, and by using rights-based policy analysis to inform advocacy at national and global levels.

- **Technological projects** cited included artificial intelligence (AI) driven crop-mapping platforms; Bayer's regenerative agriculture programmes in Brazil (PRO Carbono) and Carbon Program in the United States of America, which have demonstrated measurable improvements in yields, carbon sequestration, and environmental impact reduction; rice-fortification systems introduced by international research institutes and government agencies in Bangladesh; and TOLBI, a pan-African climate focused agritech startup whose eTolbi platform combines satellite imagery, AI and agronomic expertise to deliver real-time, climate-smart advice.

- Another focus area is **capacity building** at the local level, e.g., through establishing food systems hubs and developing practical models to scale up sustainable production, distribution and consumption practices. Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) India, for instance, is actively working to create a Food Systems Hub, aiming to foster institutional support for systemic transformation. The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN) fosters systemic change through capacity building, innovation and policy advocacy while adapting its approach to specific national contexts. Their strategy integrates cross-sectoral collaborations, rigorous impact measurement, and policy frameworks that simultaneously address food insecurity and environmental goals.

Examples of Local Community, Youth and Women-focused initiatives driving more inclusive and resilient food systems.

Level4International reported that the Value4Herplatform - launched by AGRA (the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) -is helping to mobilize women entrepreneurs across eleven African countries. Similarly, through its participation in the Regen10 initiative, the International Union for Conservation of Nature worked to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and local communities in shaping more inclusive, resilient food systems.

Additionally, a women-led workers' and trade union organization in India reported that their National Agricultural Campaign supports smallholder capacity, ensures affordable access to inputs, technology and finance and builds market linkages. Their campaign also promotes climate-resilient "forgotten foods" such as millets, ragi and sorghum; implements a cluster approach to reduce input costs and secure better harvest rates; facilitates precision-irrigation and solar cold-storage solutions; and organized smallholders into the RUDI agri-business enterprise, integrating them at every stage of the food system to advance diversity, equity and inclusion.

In addition, Youth-focused initiatives were reported as linking environmental sustainability with economic empowerment. Programmes such as YouthConnekt Africa, a Pan-African platform, and the Youth Ecobrigade in Rwanda, are helping to create green jobs and support agribusiness entrepreneurs, particularly among young people in Africa.

↓ Azerbaijan – Women farmers are increasingly taking on leading roles in their communities, driving food production and supporting rural resilience. © FAO/Javid Gurbanov



2.4 STAKEHOLDERS' CHALLENGES IN ENGAGING WITH OTHER FOOD SYSTEMS ACTORS

FIGURE 10

The main challenges stakeholders face in engaging with other food systems actors

Challenge for engaging with:	National Gov	Local Gov	UN System	MDBs	Regional Orgs	INGOs	Multinationals	SMEs	Academia
Insufficient engagement opportunities	28.66%	22.09%	23.28%	25.97%	26.27%	20.30%	22.69%	18.21%	16.12%
Lack of clarity on mechanisms	24.18%	17.91%	20.60%	19.40%	20.00%	19.10%	19.10%	14.63%	15.82%
Lack of information/awareness	24.48%	20.90%	24.48%	26.27%	21.49%	17.31%	19.10%	15.52%	14.03%
Bureaucratic barriers	35.22%	25.37%	17.31%	17.61%	17.31%	11.94%	11.94%	6.87%	9.55%
Insufficient funding	27.46%	27.46%	22.39%	17.01%	18.51%	19.10%	14.33%	18.81%	22.99%
Insufficient capacity	14.33%	17.31%	11.94%	9.55%	9.85%	9.85%	9.85%	16.72%	9.25%
Lack of inclusivity	17.61%	14.63%	16.12%	12.24%	14.63%	12.84%	11.94%	8.66%	8.96%
Visa barriers	-	-	11.64%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barriers to entry (PhD, etc.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.25%
Other	7.16%	4.18%	5.97%	6.27%	4.78%	5.07%	5.07%	2.99%	5.37%

Note: The table shows the main challenges reported by respondents when engaging with different types of organizations. The percentage reflects the proportion of respondents (out of total answering for that type of organization) who selected the given challenge. Respondents could select multiple challenges. The colour reflects how common the challenge was: Red = > 25% (very common); Orange = 20 - 24.9% (frequent), yellow = 10 – 19.99 % (occasional); Green = < 10% (less common)

Stakeholders across all regions and constituencies identified a range of systemic barriers that hinder their meaningful engagement in food systems transformation processes. The challenges reported vary by type of institution but converge around cross-cutting issues such as limited access to decision-making, weak coordination mechanisms, power imbalances and resource constraints.

National Governments

Stakeholders across all groups report significant barriers to engaging with national governments, including opaque consultation processes, weak institutional relationships, rigid bureaucracies and limited access to funding. Farmer cooperatives and grassroots groups are often excluded from decision-making forums, while business and research actors cite fragmented governance structures and poor interministerial coordination. Political volatility, logistical and infrastructural constraints, and the marginalization of agroecological and rights-based approaches further widen the gap between national policy processes and meaningful stakeholder participation.

Local Governments

Engagement at sub-national level suffers from underfunding and rigid funding schemes, staff shortages and frequent leadership turnover, limited technical capacity as well as a lack of clear understanding of food system transformation. While some business and academic stakeholders succeed in building ties, access remains uneven, with others relying on informal or network-based channels to obtain information or engage with local authorities. Cultural and political dynamics - such as institutional mistrust or the marginalization of Youth and Indigenous Peoples - create further exclusion.

UN System

Stakeholders highlight a lack of clarity, transparency and funding in their engagement with the UN system. Small-scale actors, including private sector representatives, small enterprises, civil society and women's organizations, report exclusion due to high travel costs, complex procedures, and weak feedback mechanisms. Civil society and Indigenous Peoples' groups also point to bureaucratic hurdles and unclear entry points. Academic and business actors describe fragmented engagement and limited follow-up, which hinder sustained collaboration and knowledge exchange. The private sector specifically underscores the absence of transparent and structured mechanisms for participation.

Multilateral Development Banks (MDB)

Many actors particularly small-scale farmers, youth groups, and NGOs, report exclusion from MDB-led processes due to restrictive eligibility criteria, technocratic approaches and opaque decision-making. Respondents note a persistent disconnect between MDB priorities and local realities, with engagement pathways often unclear and financial frameworks poorly aligned with the capacities of grassroots or non-profit actors. Agroecology and food systems transformation are notably under-supported, and echoing concerns from the private sector, CSOs also highlight limited eligibility for green and climate financing schemes. A second recurring challenge is the lack of clear and accessible mechanisms for stakeholder engagement.

Regional Integration Organizations

Access to regional institutions remains limited, particularly for Civil Society Organizations. A recurring issue is the lack of effective communication and structured mechanisms for participation. Political imbalances—often favoring more influential states—undermine inclusivity, while Youth and Women's groups report a systemic absence of engagement opportunities and a sense of being overlooked by institutional processes. Business and academic stakeholders call for more open and transparent platforms. Science and Technology Community actors also highlight a mismatch between regional policy priorities and the needs of scientific or local stakeholders. Fragmented agendas and the low prioritization of food systems - often subordinated to trade or economic growth - further hinder sustained dialogue and high-level engagement.

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)

A common concern among stakeholders is the lack of coordination and synergy among INGOs, with several noting that organizations "*do not communicate with each other to foster collaboration or avoid duplication of efforts*." Stakeholders often report exclusion from INGO networks due to geographic, financial, and information barriers, including poor access to transparent information-sharing systems. These dynamics create inefficiencies and reinforce power asymmetries. Civil Society Organizations and Education and Academia actors call for improved access to funding and more respectful, equitable partnerships. A limited understanding of local contexts further weakens trust and undermines effective collaboration.

Multinational Corporations

Engagement with multinational corporations is often characterized by power imbalances, symbolic inclusion, and a lack of transparency. Farmers and Civil Society Organizations, particularly Youth and Women's groups, report exclusion from decision-making, misalignment of values, and fragmented engagement. Minimal interaction is attributed either to limited access to corporate decision-makers or to the low involvement of multinational corporations in food systems transformation. Business and Academia stakeholders also highlight cultural and regulatory barriers to collaboration. From a structural standpoint, several respondents noted that corporations often shape research agendas in ways that marginalize public interest or critical voices. Limited openness to co-creation and transparency was also reported, with engagement frameworks lacking transparency, reluctance to share proprietary data, and the absence of inclusive collaboration mechanisms- issues raised in both Europe and the Global South. While some promising models exist - such as pre-competitive platforms - they remain limited in scope, scale, and accessibility.

Academia and Research

Financial constraints were identified as a cross-cutting barrier across nearly all stakeholder groups. The private sector (small-scale actors) faces persistent financial, technical, and human capacity gaps that hinder its participation in collaborative processes. Academic actors also report unstable funding, fragmented priorities, and bureaucratic delays that undermine long-term engagement. A second major obstacle concerns the lack of meaningful collaboration opportunities, often compounded by structural and logistical barriers. Farmers and Civil Society Organizations highlight disconnects between research and practice, with limited channels for co-creation or shared agenda setting. While some strong partnerships do exist, including examples from the private sector, collaboration remains shaped by systemic inefficiencies, funding instability, and underlying structural asymmetries, such as the dominance of global institutions in setting research agendas and the marginalization of local priorities.

Main challenges identified by each stakeholder group

	National Governments	Local governments	UN System	MDBs
Business and Industry	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of information & awareness
Consumers' Organizations	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient funding / Lack of information & awareness	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient funding / Insufficient capacity	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of information & awareness	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
Education and Academia	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Lack Of information & awareness	Insufficient funding	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes	Lack of information & awareness
Farmers/ Producers	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities
Indigenous Peoples Organizations	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes	Lack of information & awareness
Local Communities	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities
Non-Governmental Organizations	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient engagement opportunities / Insufficient funding	Insufficient funding	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Insufficient funding	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
Philanthropic Organizations	Lack of information & awareness	Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of information & awareness
Science and Technological Community	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient funding	Lack of inclusivity or representation	Lack of information/awareness
Women's Organizations	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient funding / Lack of information & awareness	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes	Difficulties obtaining travel visas / Insufficient engagement opportunities	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes 3/ Lack of information & awareness
Workers and Trade Unions				
Youth	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient engagement opportunities

Main challenges identified by each stakeholder group

	Regional Integration Organization	INGOs	Multinationals	SMEs	Academic and research organizations
Business and Industry	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
Consumers' Organizations	Insufficient capacity / Lack of inclusivity or representation				
Education and Academia	Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of information & awareness	Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding
Farmers/ Producers	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient funding	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient capacity	Insufficient funding
Indigenous Peoples Organizations	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of inclusivity or representation / Lack of information & awareness	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Lack of information & awareness / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Insufficient funding	Insufficient funding / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms / Lack of inclusivity or representation
Local Communities	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient engagement opportunities / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient engagement opportunities
Non-Governmental Organizations	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient funding	Insufficient funding
Philanthropic Organizations	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient capacity / Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of inclusivity or representation	Insufficient capacity / Insufficient funding / Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms / Lack of inclusivity or representation / Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement mechanisms
Science and Technological Community	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient capacity	Insufficient funding
Women's Organizations	Lack of information & awareness	Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes / Insufficient funding	Lack of information & awareness	Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient funding / Lack of information & awareness
Workers and Trade Unions					
Youth	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms	Insufficient engagement opportunities	Lack of information & awareness	Insufficient engagement mechanisms

2.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT

The transformation of food systems at local, national, regional and global levels requires a coordinated approach.. Based on the survey data and the inputs received through the public consultation seven key strategies for stakeholder engagement to strengthen the implementation of national food systems pathways could be identified:

1. Multistakeholder platforms

Respondents most frequently called for stronger partnerships and collaborations through working groups or multistakeholder platforms, emphasizing that synergies among governments, NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector are essential for sustainable transformation. From Education and Academia, the need to collaborate on joint research and innovation projects among institutions and think tanks working on sustainable agriculture and post-harvest management was stressed. Representatives of Indigenous Peoples emphasized that as participation often remains symbolic for smallholder Farmers, Women, Youth and pastoralist communities, with little influence over final decisions. They called for the institutionalization of inclusive platforms, legal guarantees for participation and citizen-led monitoring to ensure more equitable and impactful engagement. Brazil's 'Amazon Fund' (a REDD+ mechanism) was highlighted as an example of a successful co-governance structure, bringing together Indigenous Peoples, civil society and government actors in shared decision-making and was cited as a blueprint for moving from symbolic consultation to genuine co-design. A respondent from the science and technology sector in Asia suggests the establishment of Food Systems Technical Working Groups as engines for policy innovation, pilot projects and scalable interventions.

> "EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT BEGINS WHEN ALL ACTORS — FARMERS, POLICYMAKERS, BUSINESSES, RESEARCHERS, AND COMMUNITIES — COMMIT TO TRANSLATING DIALOGUE INTO TANGIBLE INITIATIVES.

2. Structured policy dialogues

Several stakeholders highlighted the need for structured, consistent dialogue with policymakers at national and regional levels to ensure local priorities and community perspectives inform decision-making. For example, a Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) representative from India observed, "*WASSAN could enhance its policy advocacy by engaging more actively with policymakers at the national level to ensure that local community perspectives and sustainable agriculture practices are integrated into national food systems strategies*." In additional contributors stressed that these dialogues should be backed by binding



↑ Panama – Indigenous leader Adelina Sanchez, uses digital tools to strengthen market access and promote sustainable, community-led food systems. © FAO/Ingrid Saravia

mechanisms and institutional commitments. Without formal accountability structures, such as follow-up mechanisms and feedback loops, stakeholder engagement risks remaining symbolic - especially when evidence provided by civil society and researchers is not reflected in final strategies.

3. Capacity-building and training

Strengthening local capacity emerged as another priority. Respondents recommended establishing training platforms, knowledge-sharing workshops and targeted educational programmes to expand skill sets in risk management, digital innovation and sustainable agricultural practices—particularly for youth, women and smallholder farmers. A farmers' organization in Cameroon called for training on climate-smart agriculture, value chains and cooperative models. Stakeholders in India similarly suggested enhancing collaboration with research institutions for tailored capacity-building initiatives. To enable food banks to contribute effectively, GFN recommended targeted capacity-building programmes, such as its Accelerator Programme, and technical assistance to develop enabling frameworks at the national level.

> "INVITE US TO CO-CREATE SOLUTIONS THROUGH ADVISORY COMMITTEES ON FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS AND AT NATIONAL DIALOGUES. INVOLVE US IN INCLUSIVE POLICY DISCUSSIONS TO REFLECT COMMUNITY VOICES, ESPECIALLY WOMEN, YOUTH, AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS.

4. Research and data-driven approaches

The strategic use of data and empirical evidence was identified as a critical lever to inform decision-making and guide advocacy. Stakeholders recommend systematic data collection, gap analysis and the dissemination of reports based on local experiences. The SUN Movement underscored the need to link food systems with nutrition to design nutrition-sensitive, sustainable policies, while the Institute of Pastoralism Development and Research (IPDR) in Kenya advocated for collaborative research and data-sharing partnerships focused on livestock sustainability and climate resilience. Similarly, the university of São Paulo advocates for the adoption of open, interoperable data dashboards, performance-linked financing, and legally anchored frameworks to institutionalize inclusive governance and ensure transparency in how stakeholder inputs are handled. Also, the importance of hybrid methodologies was highlighted that integrate both qualitative and quantitative tools to produce more representative data and close the gap between participation and actual policy influence. However, data alone is not sufficient: without clear feedback loops, follow-up mechanisms and visible commitment from decision-makers, food systems strategies risk being perceived as superficial or ineffective.

5. Resource mobilization

Access to adequate funding and the establishment of resource mobilization networks were seen as critical for successful initiatives and engagement. FOLU Kenya as well as international research centres proposed creating shared fundraising platforms and structuring integrated projects to attract both public and private financing. Others called for the creation of dedicated funding channels.

6. Community and grassroots engagement

Direct community involvement was considered fundamental. Stakeholders called for strengthening organizational capacities at the local level, promoting intergenerational dialogue and involving vulnerable groups such as youth, smallholder farmers and people with disabilities. Grassroots capacity-building to ensure community participation in decision-making and multi-level strategies combining grassroots action, academic research, policy advocacy and cross-border cooperation were mentioned as possible useful actions to enhance community and grassroots engagement.

7. Humanitarian–development integration

Finally, respondents pointed to the need for stronger stakeholder engagement in bridging humanitarian aid with long-term food systems transformation. Mothers First (a CSO based in Ireland) emphasized the urgency of integrating humanitarian, development and peace-building approaches in food systems transformation—particularly in countries facing protracted crises. The organization noted that a lack of coordinated implementation and sustained support can erode trust in national pathways and deepen existing vulnerabilities. At the same time, they pointed to the strong perceived alignment between the SUN Movement and national food systems transformation pathways, particularly in Least Developed Countries. According to the organization, this alignment constitutes a valuable source of political and social capital. However, without adequate and sustained follow-up, it risks generating a sense of abandonment and disillusionment among local actors.

CHAPTER 3

TRACKING COMMITMENTS AND FOSTERING COLLABORATIONS

This chapter focuses on stakeholders' collaboration and commitments. It examines whether stakeholders have established clear, measurable commitments and monitoring mechanisms to track their own progress. It highlights the concrete actions they have taken to foster collaboration within and across stakeholder groups and other food systems actors. It also looks at opportunities to further enhance collaboration.

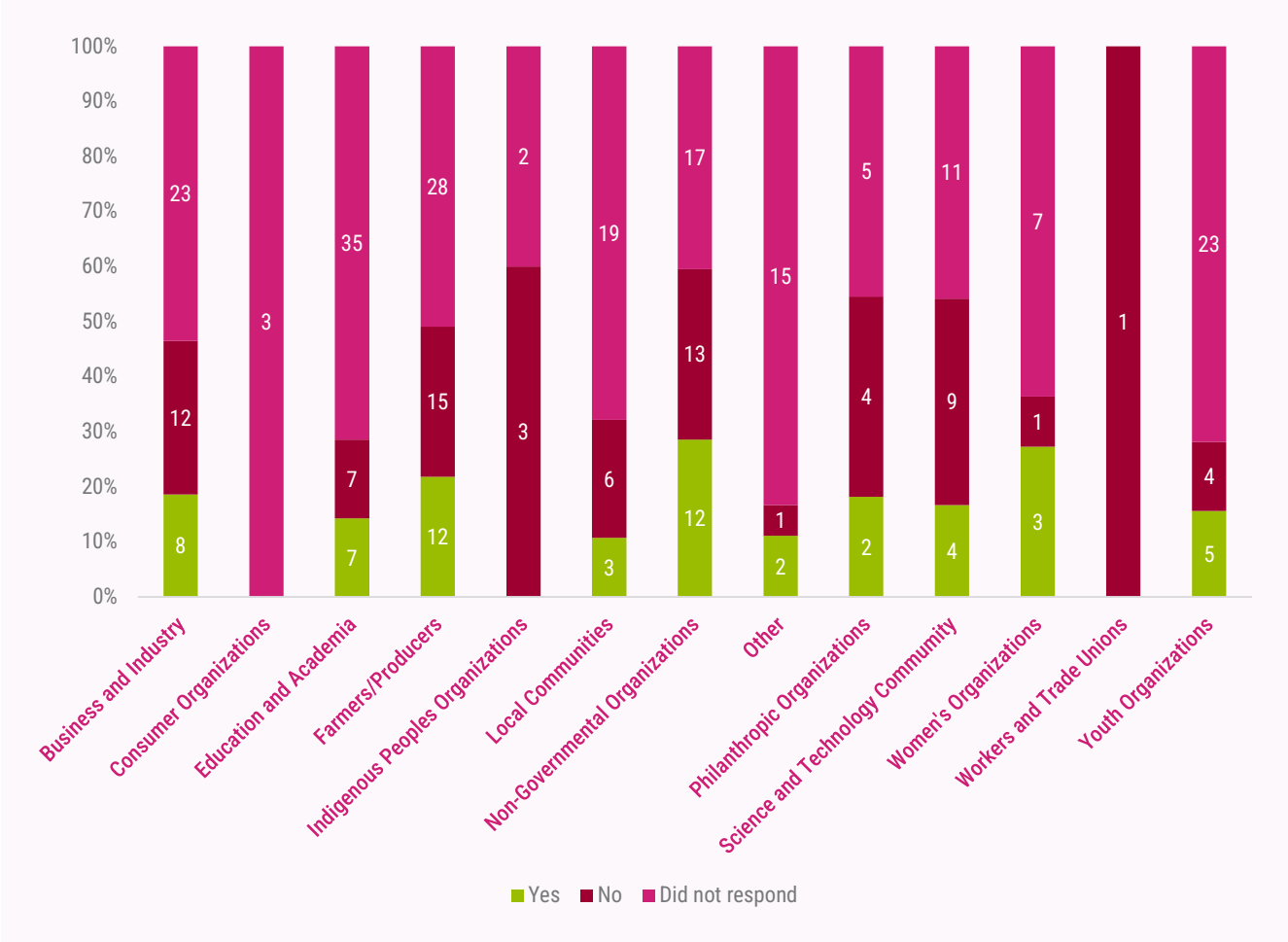
3.1 STAKEHOLDERS' COMMITMENTS TO SUPPORTING FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION AND STRENGTHENING RELATED MONITORING MECHANISMS

↓ Ghana – Farmers Christabel Kwasi, Jagiti Agishi, and Mohammed Anita cultivate, process, and sell fonio.
© FAO/Fanjan Combrink



FIGURE 11

Stakeholders with specific, time-bound and measurable commitments and monitoring tools



Note: This figure illustrates how different stakeholder groups responded to the question of whether their organization has specific, time-bound, and measurable commitments, along with a related monitoring tool or mechanism, to support food systems transformation. The y-axis shows the percentage distribution of responses across three categories: *Yes*, *No*, and *Did not respond*. Each bar represents a stakeholder group, and the height of each colored segment reflects the proportion of that group's responses in each category. The numbers within the segments indicate the actual number of respondents.

Among the organizations surveyed, **58 percent (188) did not respond to the existence of specific, time-bound commitments and related monitoring mechanisms** for food-systems transformation. Of those who did reply, 43 percent (58) confirmed that they have such commitments and instruments in place, accompanied by descriptions or evidence, while 57 percent (76) reported that they do not. The high percentage of non-responses may reflect limited institutional capacity, lack of prioritization, or low awareness regarding the importance of time-bound and trackable commitments.

The figures suggest a widespread gap in the formalization and monitoring of stakeholder commitments to food systems transformation, with the exception of several actors of the Business and Industry Based on the responses even when some form of monitoring is in place, it is often fragmented, relying on internal reviews or audits rather

than comprehensive frameworks capable of tracking progress and informing decision-making. The responses reveal that most commitments remain voluntary and are rarely articulated through formalized time-bound and measurable objectives. Fully functional monitoring systems are largely absent or remain general intentions rather than structured strategies supported by centralized mechanisms.

Strengthening monitoring frameworks and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability should therefore be considered key priorities for future collective efforts.

In this regard, Mothers First emphasized the need for more transparent and inclusive monitoring mechanisms, grounded in a human rights-based accountability framework. The organization warned that a lack of transparency undermines the legitimacy and trust of local actors in the process. A senior researcher from Sciensano, Belgium's public health institute, highlighted persistent governance gaps that weaken accountability in food systems. Drawing on independent assessments, they reported a disconnect between corporate narratives and concrete, time-bound actions. Despite public endorsements of food systems goals, they argue that many company commitments remain vague, non-binding and focused on reputation rather than impact. To address this, they recommended safeguards for multistakeholder platforms: balanced representation, conflict-of-interest protocols, independent facilitation, transparent decision-making, and the formal use of civil society monitoring tools.

Representatives of **Education and Academia**, including the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, highlighted that, at the local level, most food systems commitments remain informal and fragmented, particularly among smaller CSOs. While national strategies may articulate high-level goals, the absence of inclusive implementation mechanisms and institutional support hampers local engagement. To address these gaps, the Foundation suggests the establishment of voluntary commitment registries, supported by national coordination platforms, to formalize decentralized efforts and enhance progress tracking over time.

Among **Farmers and Producers**, some indicate that monitoring frameworks remain a work in progress. However, certain commitments are backed by more advanced tools, for example, the U.S. Dairy Industry's commitment to issue five-year progress reports beginning in 2025 to track progress toward its 2050 green-house gas (GHG)-neutrality goal. Another positive example comes from AFA which, through regular national consultations, has actively involved National Convenors and focal points to integrate farmer-led recommendations. Moreover, the AFA maintains an online database of farmers and organizations, accessible via its website, which serves both as a transparency tool and a monitoring mechanism to track actors, initiatives and progress in the region.

Among stakeholder actions to promote inclusive collaboration **Indigenous**-led initiatives offer critical contributions. As highlighted in the UNFSS+4 Regional Preparatory Meetings, grassroots accountability efforts, particularly those led by Indigenous communities, demonstrate the value of localized, context-specific knowledge in shaping resilient and sustainable food systems. Tools such as the Indigenous Navigator empower communities to collect and manage their own food systems data, reinforcing sovereignty over knowledge and enabling tailored policy advocacy. However, despite their relevance, these initiatives often face structural barriers to integration within national policy frameworks. Given that the Asia-Pacific region alone is home to nearly 70 percent of the world's Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders emphasized the urgent need to treat traditional ecological knowledge not as supplementary, but as foundational to food systems transformation - especially in climate-vulnerable areas.

From the **Science and Technological community**, an international research centre outlined its specific, time-bound and measurable commitments anchored in its 2030 strategy and expressed through a structured set of performance indicators aligned with strategic goals, such as climate resilience, genetic innovation, sustainable intensification and social inclusion. Monitoring and evaluation rely on robust tools, including the Performance Monitoring and Learning System (PMLS), the MELIA framework (Monitoring, evaluation, learning and impact assessment) and geo-enabled dashboards that allow real-time and longitudinal tracking of outputs and outcomes. A further example comes from the Cameroon National Digital Agricultural Knowledge Center (CNNCA), a multistakeholder e-agriculture platform, which integrates monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of stakeholder engagement and policy implementation.

In terms of measurable commitments among **Non-Governmental Organizations**, a positive example has been provided by the GFN which aims to recover one percent of global food loss by 2030, increase the recovery of nutritious food by 20 percent, and achieve a tenfold growth in agrifood recovery through its Recovery Hub. These targets are tracked via GFN's Annual Network Survey and reported in its Annual Impact Report. Additionally, GFN employs the FRAME methodology, a standardized tool that measures the environmental and nutritional impacts of food banks, including their role in reducing methane emissions.

Access to Nutrition Initiative (ATNi) called for the development of clear and transparent engagement principles for private sector participation in food systems dialogues. While ATNi did not report institutional commitments of its own, it stressed the importance of external monitoring instruments to assess the alignment of corporate actors with public health and nutrition goals. Specifically, they highlighted the potential of independent benchmarking tools such as the Global Access to Nutrition Index and the Breast-milk Substitutes Index to evaluate company actions, monitor compliance with international standards, and inform policy and engagement decisions. These tools were presented as critical accountability mechanisms to assess private sector conduct, especially in contexts where voluntary commitments remain vague or untracked.

Business and Industry stakeholders reported increasingly structured and measurable commitments toward food systems transformation, often aligned with ESG priorities.

These commitments typically feature clear, time-bound targets, such as reducing GHG emissions, enhancing soil health, improving water use, access to nutrition, supporting smallholder farmers, or halving food waste by 2030, and are embedded within broader corporate sustainability strategies. To monitor progress, businesses are adopting tools and methodologies, including globally recognized frameworks like those developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (CP-EIR) methodology, PestLCI (developed by the Technical University of Denmark for estimating pesticide emissions), USEtox for assessing the human health and ecotoxicological impacts of chemical emissions (UNEP Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry) and ESG reporting standards. Sector-wide initiatives such as the Regenerative Agriculture Metrics (RAM) and the Dairy Sustainability Framework provide additional aligned metrics across corporate, landscape and farm levels, enabling consistent measurement of environmental, social and economic impacts.

Many companies also employ internal monitoring systems governed by high-level sustainability committees, supported by external audits and third-party evaluations, to ensure accountability. Participation in multistakeholder

initiatives (e.g. One Planet Business for Biodiversity (OP2B), Global Dairy Platform) facilitates aligned reporting and shared learning, while joint development of monitoring tools fosters comparability and harmonization across actors.

Examples of commitment and measurement tools by Business and Industry stakeholders

WBCSD supports member companies in developing tools and guidance to monitor progress and integrate sustainability into business decision-making. One key initiative is the Global Framework for Regenerative Agriculture, developed through regenerative agriculture metrics in collaboration with OP2B, engaging over 1,100 companies. The framework includes 11 core metrics—such as GHG emissions reduction, soil carbon sequestration, ecological health, and farm income—designed for integration into ESG reporting and to attract public and private investment.

Among individual companies, Bayer has a commitment monitoring system structured around four key targets: (1) support 100 million smallholder farmers by 2030, (2) reduce its overall environmental impact, as measured by its Environmental Impact Reduction metric by 30 percent, (3) cut GHG emissions by 30 percent, and (4) improve water-use efficiency by 25 percent. Bayer uses the CP-EIR methodology and is expanding it to include impacts on soil organisms and pollinators.

Tetra Pak has identified four strategic "change pathways," each with defined targets, indicators and baselines, ranging from enabling a more sustainable dairy transition to expanding access to safe nutrition.

A strong example of structured commitment to food systems transformation comes also from a Japanese industry, which has developed a comprehensive sustainability management framework. The company has set medium- and long-term targets, including achieving net-zero CO_2 emissions by 2050 and cutting food waste by 50 percent by 2030. Progress is tracked through an ISO 14001-based environmental management system applied across all sites, supported by regular audits. Oversight is provided by a sustainability committee chaired by the company president, ensuring alignment with evolving sustainability priorities.

Similarly, the Dairy Sustainability Framework, led by the Global Dairy Platform, has provided the sector with a global monitoring tool for over a decade. It tracks sustainability progress across 11 criteria aligned with the environmental, social and economic pillars, offering a common baseline and language for continuous improvement across the dairy sector.

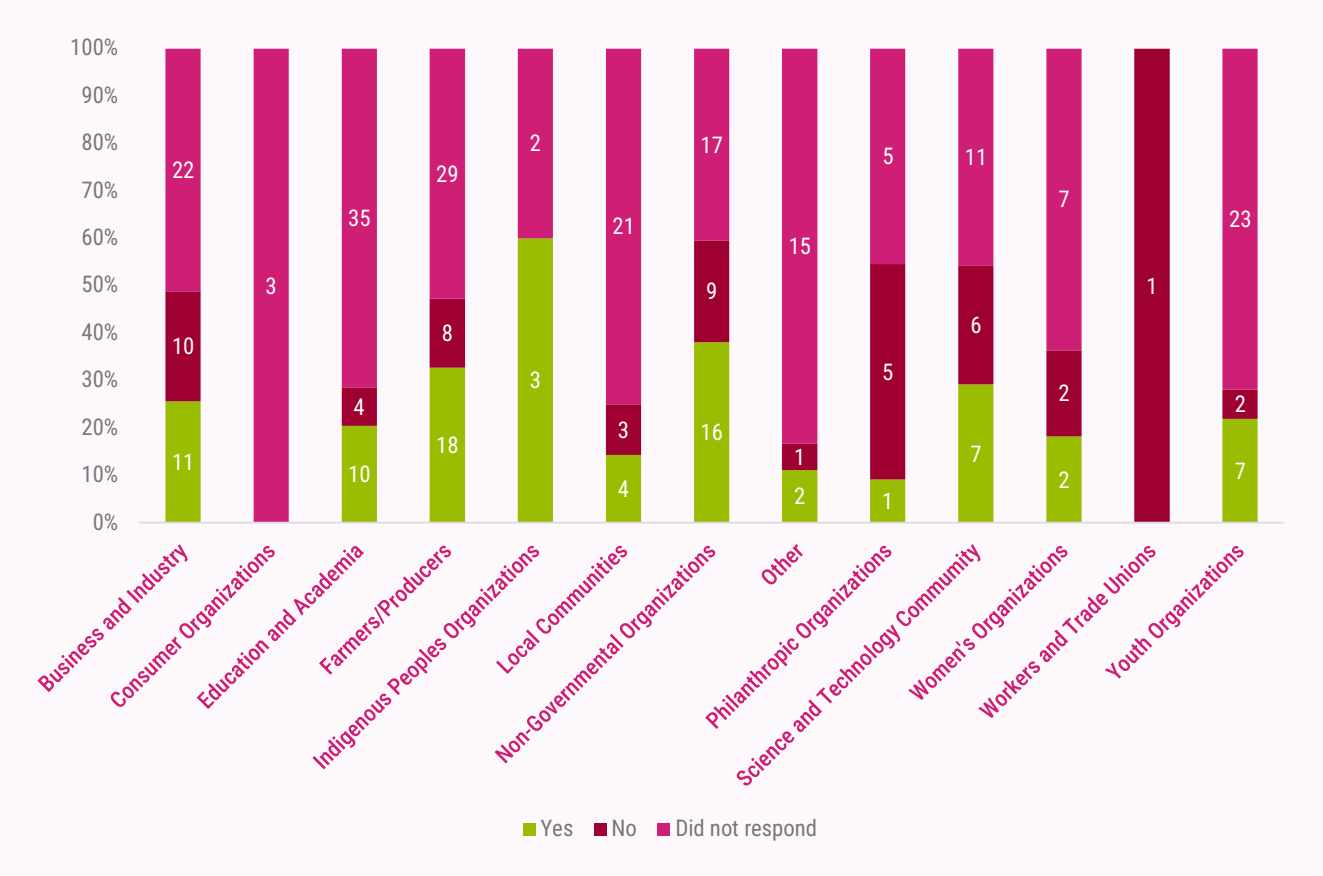
These efforts reflect a broader shift toward embedding sustainability outcomes into core business operations and investment strategies, supported by robust, metric-based monitoring mechanisms that track both progress and areas requiring further attention. The increasing use of standardized frameworks (e.g. ESG metrics, ISO systems) along with clearly defined targets, and dedicated governance mechanisms illustrate how Business and Industry is increasingly adopting structured approaches to track progress toward food systems transformation goals. These practices can offer valuable insights for other stakeholder groups on strengthening transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment in monitoring commitments.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION STRATEGIES

A significant portion of respondents (59 percent) did not respond to the question on the existence of a clear strategy for partnering with the public sector and other food systems actors in relation to national pathways or other food systems transformation efforts. 25 percent indicated that their organization has a defined strategy for partnership, suggesting that approximately a quarter of respondents are actively aligning their efforts with public sector actors and other stakeholders to implement national strategies for food systems transformation. Conversely, 16 percent explicitly stated that they do not have a clear strategy for engagement, underscoring a potential gap in strategic planning or institutional capacity. This segment may include organizations that are less integrated into national planning processes or that face structural barriers to establishing collaborative frameworks with other stakeholders.

FIGURE 12

Stakeholders with a clear strategy for engaging with the public sector and other food systems actors in relation to the implementation of their countries' national pathway document (or similar plan)



Note: This figure illustrates how different stakeholder groups responded to the question of whether their organization has a clear strategy for engaging with the public sector and other food systems actors in relation to the implementation of their country's national pathway document (or a similar national food systems plan). The y-axis represents the percentage distribution of responses across three categories: *Yes*, *No*, and *Did not respond*. Each bar represents a stakeholder group, with the height of each colored segment indicating the proportion of that group's responses in each category. The numbers within the segments show the actual number of respondents.

The combination of a high rate of non-response and a ***relatively small proportion of organizations that reported having a clearly defined collaboration strategy*** means it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the extent to which stakeholders are able and can be effectively mobilized to contribute to the implementation of national pathways or similar plans. At the same time, it also suggests potential areas for targeted capacity-building, communication and outreach to ensure broader alignment and participation in food systems transformation efforts.

Among **Non-Governmental Organizations**

- ***Advocacy*** emerges as a central strategy for engaging with public sector actors and other stakeholders involved in food systems transformation. Advocacy efforts are strategically positioned to link local initiatives to global frameworks while emphasizing accountability, policy alignment and the inclusion of marginalized voices. For instance, the global SUN Civil Society Network's approach leverages its extensive network to amplify the perspectives of vulnerable populations, ensuring that food systems policies are nutrition-sensitive and aligned with international commitments. Another example is the Right to Food Organization in Bangladesh, which promotes the right to food by mobilizing smallholder farmers, fishers, CSOs and policymakers to foster inclusive policy frameworks. Similarly, the Green Rev Institute in Poland leverages its theory of change through the Safe Food Federation, combining advocacy and social support to advance sustainable food system laws and align efforts at both national and global levels.
- ***Multistakeholder engagement*** is another strategy, to ensure continuous coordination and alignment through facilitating independent dialogues and multistakeholder platforms. RSDA in Lesotho, for example, underscores the importance of building partnerships and creating spaces for ongoing feedback, thereby reinforcing the broader push for systemic change within national food systems frameworks. ***Inclusivity and representation*** are critical components of these engagement strategies. NGOs emphasize the integration of marginalized voices, women and grassroots actors into food systems planning and policy dialogues. Initiatives such as the coalition led by the German aid agency Welthungerhilfe in Malawi illustrate this commitment, positioning the inclusion of collective and marginalized voices as a key area of focus within national working groups.

The focus on the inclusion of marginalized voices is also reflected in the collaboration strategies (advocacy, awareness raising) of **Indigenous Peoples** organizations. For example, the IPDR, in Kenya, advocates for pastoralist-inclusive policies. IPDR collects data through its I-Monitor Programme to track food security and livestock sustainability and uses these insights to advocate for targeted policy interventions. It also conducts community sensitization programmes and public campaigns to bridge the gap between policymakers and pastoralist producers.

Among **Youth** organizations, collaboration strategies for food systems transformation focus on ***advocacy and capacity building***. Advocacy efforts centre around bridging the gap between youth and agriculture, promoting policies that make farming more accessible, profitable and technology driven. Capacity building focuses on strengthening the skills of young people and local communities, enabling them to actively participate in food systems transformation processes. This includes enhancing Youth participation in public workshops and strategic dialogues to foster awareness and facilitate collaboration

Responses from **Business and Industry** emphasize broader strategic approaches that combine capacity development and local farmer empowerment with public-private partnerships and structured collaboration platforms. These platforms bring together governments, UN agencies, and trade partners to support food systems transformation through technological innovation and alignment with national strategies. They often include components such as technical assistance, policy engagement in global forums, and training programmes to strengthen business capacity and influence food systems-related policy and practice.

Examples of Business and Industry collaboration strategies

The strategies of Bayer and Tetra Pak stand out as clear examples of structured engagement strategies with public sector actors and other stakeholders involved in food systems transformation. Bayer's strategy is characterized by targeted initiatives that align with national pathways and broader sustainability goals. In India, Bayer collaborates with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research through the DirectAcres programme, addressing water stress and climate challenges through direct-seeded rice cultivation. In Kenya, it engages in public-private initiatives like TELA Maize, providing drought- and pest-resistant maize, and collaborates with county governments and NGOs on targeted farmer training programmes. In Brazil, Bayer's PRO Carbono initiative advances regenerative practices through collaborations with EMBRAPA (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation), directly contributing to Brazil's sustainable agriculture objectives.

Similarly, Tetra Pak collaborates with governments, industry partners and local communities to foster food security, reduce food loss and waste and improve livelihoods. Its initiatives include School Feeding Programmes, the development of Dairy Hubs to support small-scale farmers and collaborative research into diverse, scalable protein sources. Through these strategies, Tetra Pak seeks to contribute to more resilient and sustainable global food systems while aligning with national and international food security frameworks.

Wayfield Agriculture Technology (India) reported its collaboration with public institutions to integrate climate-smart agricultural practices into national policies, while also actively participating in policy dialogues on carbon markets and sustainable supply chains, supporting these initiatives with the provision of data and analytics.

Among **Education and Academia and Science and Technology stakeholders**, there were several reported strategies demonstrating structured engagement with public sector actors and other stakeholders involved in food systems transformation.

- A key trend is the creation of national coordination hubs to streamline stakeholder engagement and align policy actions. An example of such coordination efforts is seen in Vietnam, where the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, is actively participating in a partnership aimed at implementing the National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation. A similar approach is being pursued in Ethiopia, where a review of recent multistakeholder initiatives is underway to consolidate lessons learned and strengthen multisectoral action on food systems.

- Capacity building and education also emerge as prominent strategies, with institutions like the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (Nigeria) establishing a centre of excellence dedicated to food systems transformation through research and development. Another example is the University of Ladakh (India) which, is conducting skill development workshops and exposure visits in collaboration with local enterprises.
- In terms of data-driven strategies, WorldFish (Myanmar) emphasizes the use of evidence-based tools to inform policy, advocate for systemic change, and align actions with broader global commitments.
- Finally, the development of frameworks and strategic plans is highlighted as a means of structuring engagement. CNNCA's Engagement Strategy includes a detailed roadmap, with partner mapping, stakeholder dialogues and structured communication plans to facilitate alignment with food systems transformation objectives. Meanwhile, Wageningen University & Research (WUR) launched its Strategic Plan 2025-2028 positioning itself as a key facilitator of multistakeholder engagement in sustainable food systems through collaborative projects and policy-linked research.

Among **Farmers and Producers** political engagement and advocacy have become pivotal strategies for collaboration aiming to influence food systems transformation. Since 2021, the AFA has been organizing national consultations to incorporate farmers' recommendations into national food systems strategies, fostering a bottom-up approach to policy influence. The association then actively engages with platforms like the Asia Pacific Farmers' Forum, Global Farmers' Forum, and FAO-led Family Farming Platform, facilitating dialogues on agroecology and climate resilience. Similarly, the U.S. Dairy Export Council, have actively participated in key policy forums such as the UNEP Farmers Major Group and the UNFCCC Farmers Constituency, ensuring that the voices of U.S. dairy producers are represented in global discussions on sustainable agriculture.

3.3 ACTIONS TAKEN BY STAKEHOLDERS TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER FOOD SYSTEMS ACTORS

This section presents concrete actions stakeholders took to foster collaboration within and across stakeholder groups and other food systems actors, as well as the key achievements reported. A recurring theme across stakeholder responses is the emphasis on building partnerships and collaborative frameworks, often facilitated through multistakeholder platforms or knowledge hubs, including virtual mechanism. While these spaces are widely acknowledged for enabling dialogue and coordination, stakeholders also flagged concerns about inclusivity, follow-up, and tangible impact.

Despite the fact that most stakeholders seem not to have a formal strategy for collaborating with other food systems actors, across the food systems landscape, they have formed a densely interconnected collaboration web linking national and subnational governments, multilateral agencies, research institutions, NGOs, private enterprises and producer organizations.

- Farmers and Producers often occupy a central node—working with public bodies to mainstream digital and climate-smart practices, with research partners to advance innovation and precision agriculture, with NGOs on policy advocacy and capacity building and with businesses to improve market access and financing.

- Business and Industry, in turn, collaborates with NGOs, governments and international agencies to pilot new technologies, strengthen supply chains and bolster resilience.
- CSOs engage with public institutions, UN bodies and academic centres to drive policy reform and community-level training.
- Research networks link universities, national institutes and intergovernmental forums to scale technological and genetic innovations.
- Multilateral platforms facilitate cross-regional exchanges and harmonize data-driven approaches.

Within this broad landscape of connectivity, it is important to note that collaboration is often uneven in conflict-affected areas, and **Youth- and Women**-led initiatives, although impactful, represent a smaller share of the overall collaboration landscape. These trends highlight the strength of multisectoral cooperation and the need for targeted efforts to fill remaining gaps and ensure truly inclusive food systems transformation.

In Jordan, the **women's** organization Equality for Training and Human Rights teamed up with Green Jordan to deliver training in sustainable farming, integrating human rights principles for marginalized farmers. In Nigeria, the Women in Agricultural Business Cooperative Society Limited (NiWAB) collaborate with the Niger State government to cultivate rice on 540 hectares and supply farm inputs for 549 hectares. Additionally, the cooperative reported collaboration with local businesses to provide training for female CEOs.

Youth reported actions to strengthen engagement with other food systems actors, focused on multistakeholder dialogue and policy co-development together with cross-sector collaboration. The example they brought was the Youth Policy Board's initiative of FAO's World Food Forum, launched in 2021, that co-develop policy recommendations and implement capacity-building programmes to foster youth leadership at national, regional and global levels in the transformation of agrifood systems.

In addition to this global initiative, some respondents reported national and subnational engagement. For example, one youth organization in Nigeria is part of the National Task Team for Food Systems Engagements, working to connect local communities and stakeholders in support of national transformation efforts. Another respondent, based in South Africa, referred to involvement in subnational strategies such as the Western Cape Climate Change Response Strategy and the SmartAgri plan, which focus on climate resilience and food systems transformation toward 2050. Other examples included informal or resource-constrained collaborations, such as joint events around education and environmental awareness days in Cameroon, as well as participation in virtual consultations or expressions of interest for future partnerships. While these initiatives remain relatively limited in scope, they reflect an emerging effort to increase youth-led collaboration in food systems governance.

Non-Governmental Organization stakeholders have built extensive coalitions and platforms to address food system challenges in collaboration with other civil society actors, academia, governments, public institutions and UN agencies. Climate change mitigation and adaptation—along with related priorities such as regenerative agriculture and sustainable nutrient management—have emerged as key focus areas for collaboration by NGOs and local communities.

Examples of actions taken by Non-Governmental Organizations to strengthen collaboration with other actors

The Coalition for Food Systems Transforma(c)tion in India (CoFTI), led by WASSAN with GIZ, Welthungerhilfe and Food Future Foundation, advocates for reforms ranging from farmer empowerment and decentralized supply chains to embedding sustainability and nutrition at every policy level. WASSAN also collaborates with the Government of Odisha and local development partners to promote millet cultivation through the Odisha Millets Mission. At the multilateral level, CoFTI have also worked with FAO to facilitate consultations for Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs. FOLU India maintains active engagement with national stakeholders through the follow up to the Food Systems Summit and Food Systems Dialogues. FOLU India has also conducted regional consultations to identify gaps in sustainable food systems transformation. It is currently developing a Nature Climate Solutions Hub to unlock mitigation-based finance for sustainable agriculture in collaboration with other organizations.

The Plant Based Treaty has collaborated with UNICEF and Youth 4 Water Plus to organize successive editions of the Plant Based Treaty Youth Internship Program, featuring webinars on animal ethics, climate science and the impact of food systems on planetary boundaries, along with film screenings.

A separate initiative, Future Food 4 Climate, launched by the Green REV Institute, a Polish NGO operating across Europe and Central Asia, brings together CSOs, academics and local leaders to foster inclusive dialogue and policy development aligned with European Union (EU) sustainability goals.

In Kenya, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) supports the Government of Kenya in developing a national food systems dashboard. Still in Kenya, IPDR partnered with Brooke East Africa to safeguard donkeys vital to the livelihoods of the Turkana people, for the organization of community walks, legal clinics and advocacy campaigns. It also collaborated with Amref Health Africa to pilot a digital Livelihood-Monitor, tracking market trends for pastoralists. IPDR has also teamed up with counterparts in Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan on cross-border livestock mobility and market-integration strategies. Furthermore, IPDR, has collaborated with intergovernmental bodies like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Eastern Africa and FAO to integrate pastoralist food systems into broader food security frameworks, ensuring that the perspectives of pastoralist communities are adequately represented in international dialogues.

Food for Life Nepal collaborated with the Ministry of Education, World Food Programme and local authorities to enhance a dedicated mid-day meal programme for more than 13,000 children in 46 community schools. Also in Nepal, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD), spearheaded the formation of an Agroecology Technical Working Group under the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative, engaging government institutions, research bodies, civil society and farmer networks to co-develop the country's Agroecology Roadmap, aligning national efforts and promoting shared ownership of agroecological transformation.

Globally, the NGO Compassion in World Farming International (CIWF) has launched a Food Business Programme, working with major food companies to integrate animal welfare and regenerative practices into corporate policies. CIWF has also been organizing a series of side events in collaboration with governments from Pakistan, Romania and Japan during global climate fora such as UNEA, HLPF and COP29, discussing the topic of sustainable nitrogen management.

GFN's strategic partnerships span food banks and national networks in over 50 countries, as well as UNEP, FAO, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the World Bank, Unilever and Walmart, delivering a proven local approach to hunger reduction and emissions mitigation. GFN supports the integration of food loss and waste reduction goals into NDCs through the Global Action Drive initiative; the development of strategic cooperation alliances where food banks showcase their dual impact on hunger and methane emission reduction; and the establishment of cross-country knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the Global Atlas of Food Donation Policies, to support policy transfer and adaptation across national contexts. GFN further exemplifies this through its active participation in the Global Methane Hub and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition's Waste Leadership Hub, positioning food banks as strategic partners in methane reduction and waste management, directly linking food systems transformation to climate mitigation. These illustrate successful coordination efforts that demonstrate the collaborative potential of food banks in food systems governance.

A further example of coordinated, multistakeholder action is provided by a U.S.-based industry organization representing the dairy sector. One of its key programmes, Dairy Net Zero Initiative, is being implemented through a strategic partnership in collaboration with other dairy organizations. The initiative mobilizes private capital and technical expertise to strengthen inclusive, climate-resilient dairy value chains across East Africa, increase the availability of nutritious food and reduce GHG emissions in line with national food systems priorities. GDP has also engaged directly with FAO to optimize the contribution of the global dairy sector to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reflecting a shared commitment to sustainability and inclusive food systems transformation.

Welthungerhilfe also shared a promising example from Malawi, where as part of a civil society alliance, contributed to a joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review, a mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council, highlighting the importance of the right to food in addressing systemic challenges. This enables communities to raise concerns regarding public programmes related to food and nutrition security and reflects a tangible shift towards rights-based governance. The example underscores that institutional accountability and stakeholder engagement do not necessarily require large financial investments but can be achieved through coordinated advocacy and commitment at local level.

Farmers and Producers actively collaborate with a diverse range of stakeholders to advance food systems transformation. In particular, these collaborations have enhanced the integration of digital tools and financial inclusion initiatives which have empowered farmers to scale up their impact and strengthen market linkages.

Examples of collaborative actions undertaken by Farmers/Producers to advance food systems transformation

Farmers collaborated with NGO networks and CSOs, such as KULIKA Uganda, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade, Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) Uganda, PELUM Uganda and Slow Food Uganda, to amplify policy issues and farmers' voices in policymaking.

Working with major private-sector players in India, including BigBasket, Ninjacart, PepsiCo, ITC and Cargill, farming and producer organizations promoted sustainable sourcing to ensure fair pricing and reduce supply-chain inefficiencies.

In Cameroon, local farmers collaborated with a plantain-processing company to meet growing demand, pooling resources to boost production by 500 percent.

In Brazil, the Mato Grosso do Sul State Federation for Livestock and Agriculture Youth partnered with schools and institutions to raise children's awareness of sustainable food systems.

At the regional level, multistakeholder alliances operating in East Africa collaborated with producer groups and other actors to strengthen local supply chains, enhance climate resilience and mitigate food crises.

Large private companies and SMEs are increasingly acting as catalysts for food systems transformation by collaborating with NGOs, governments, multilateral organizations, research institutions, and local communities. Responses from **Business and Industry** stakeholders show that a clear trend is emerging around building strategic partnerships to reduce environmental impact and promote climate-smart practices. These partnerships drive innovation, resilience and inclusive growth by integrating new technologies, sustainable practices and equitable value chains. For example:

- In Singapore, private companies have teamed up with WWF and Humane International, to promote regenerative and humane practices, including agroecology, by encouraging local sourcing and raising awareness among consumers about the benefits of sustainable food systems. Another example comes from a business group that joined forces with the Global Challenge Against Food Loss and Waste and the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty on various food systems transformation initiatives.
- In Senegal, local enterprises collaborated with the national government to develop an AI-powered crop-mapping and yield-forecasting tool that corrects peanut production statistics and enables more effective policy planning.
- In Japan, a local industry worked with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and affiliated bodies to secure stable raw-material supply chains.

- In India, Wayfield Agricultural Technology partnered with NITI Aayog (the Government of India's public policy Think Tank) and state agricultural departments to integrate digital agronomy solutions and climate-smart farming into national strategies. Through these collaborations they also launched pilot projects on carbon farming and regenerative agriculture to enhance soil fertility. In addition, they connected with international research institutions such as CIMMYT (the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center) and ICRISAT (the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics) to develop climate-resilient crop varieties and precision-farming techniques.
- The Global Dairy Platform, through its flagship initiative *Pathways to Dairy Net Zero*, supported by over 200 stakeholders promote sustainable dairy practices via task forces and multistakeholder projects to strengthen smallholder livelihoods while reducing GHG emissions, aligned with national food systems priorities.

Cross-sector and cross-value chain collaboration is recognized as essential to addressing complex food systems challenges. Multistakeholder initiatives, including public-private partnerships and industry coalitions, are fostering systemic change by combining resources, expertise and governance mechanisms. For example:

- Bayer joined USAID's AGRI-Ukraine initiative to distribute seed donations, digital tools and safety campaigns to thousands of farmers, significantly boosting agricultural resilience. Bayer has also partnered with public and private actors to mobilize substantial financing for forestry projects aimed at forest protection and emissions reduction through the LEAF Coalition (Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance).
- Tetra Pak engages in global partnerships and is an active member of platforms such as the WBCSD, the GDP and the World Resources Institute's Corporate Consultative Group as part of positioning itself as a leader in sustainable dairy processing by using 100 percent renewable energy in its major factories and assessing the carbon footprint of its products.

The responses collected also point to a growing emphasis on co-governance models that engage civil society and Indigenous Peoples, fostering transparency and accountability in sustainability efforts. For example:

- In Brazil, the Landscape Accelerator brings together a diverse coalition of stakeholders to drive the regenerative transformation of key Brazilian landscapes, beginning with the Cerrado and the state of Pará. Convened by the WBCSD, Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development, BCG, the COP28 Presidency, and the High-Level Climate Champions, the initiative includes 15 of the world's leading agri-food companies alongside the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, the State of Pará, and Fundação Dom Cabral. Members include major corporations such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Inter IKEA Group, Nestlé, and PepsiCo, as well as core partners like The Nature Conservancy, TechnoServe and the FOLU, supported by a wide network of public, private, financial, philanthropic, and civil society actors.
- One contributor mentioned the Amazon Fund's governance model emphasizing the value of co-design, transparent handling of stakeholder input, and performance-linked financing.

Among **Education, Academia, Science and Technology stakeholders**, collaborative efforts to advance food systems transformation have increasingly taken the form of formalized partnerships, strategic dialogues and multistakeholder platforms. Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) are commonly used to establish official collaborations between

universities, research institutions, government bodies and international organizations facilitating coordinated work on research, policy engagement, and capacity-building across regions and sectors.

Ongoing collaboration with a diverse range of actors, including farmers' groups, local governments, private sector partners, and youth networks, has been essential to strengthening cross-sector accountability. Academia and research institutions are also leveraging global and regional partnerships to drive science- and technology-based innovations that improve productivity, resilience, and sustainability.

Examples of collaboration between Education and Academia, and the Science and Technological Community, and:

National governments

- The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT has signed MoUs with ministries and government institutions in Benin and Ethiopia. In Benin, the MoU supported the work of the former National Council of Food and Nutrition and facilitated research collaborations with universities, as well as partnerships with local and international organizations such as GAIN and *Au Cœur des Hommes*. In Ethiopia, MoUs were established with three national food systems conveners. Similarly, the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University has a MoU with the Agricultural Research Council in Nigeria. In Vietnam, they joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and over 30 partners under the "*Partnership Agreement for Transparent, Responsible and Sustainable Food Systems Transformation in Vietnam*," enhancing transparency, accountability and sustainability across the country's food systems.
- In the Philippines, research institutes are collaborating with both the national Department of Science and Technology and local cooperatives to establish and run the Smart Value Chain and Manufacturing Village Facility in Tuburan, complete with a mobile lab for food safety and quality testing and direct technical support to smallholder farmers.
- In Rwanda, an education organization has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment to co-design and develop an automated dashboards for agricultural data analysis to provide real-time insights and strengthen inter-agency coordination.

International Organizations and other Education and Academia and Science and Technology actors

- Hungary's University of Debrecen has collaborated with FAO's World Food Forum to engage young scientists and researchers in international policy dialogues, youth empowerment programmes and sustainable-agriculture initiatives.
- Research institutions report joining forces with CGIAR centres (including WorldFish, International Water Management Institute and CIMMYT to promote rice–fish systems across South and Southeast Asia, boosting productivity, profitability and resilience while ensuring a steady supply of nutritious food.

- In research and genetic development, national agricultural research institutions across Africa, South Asia and Latin America have collaborated with international research centres and UN agencies to advance seed systems, mechanization and precision agriculture for improved food security and to strengthen climate-resilient agrifood systems.
- In Mexico, the MasAgro project brings together international research centres, the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Institute of Forestry, Agricultural and Livestock Research and private-sector actors to advance sustainable intensification through better seed access and mechanization.

Business and Industry

- In the Netherlands, WUR collaborates with the National Food Partnership (a public-private partnership) to back multiple agricultural and food security initiatives, including the Netherlands East African Dairy Partnership platform for knowledge exchange and sector development in East Africa.
- In Morocco, the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) operates as a research-intensive institution with strong industrial linkages, focusing on African-led solutions in AI, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and health. Through platforms such as StartGate and InnovX, it has supported over 1,000 startups in sectors ranging from greentech to healthtech. Flagship initiatives like the African Youth Climate Hub have helped to empower young people to co-develop climate solutions. UM6P is also launching a new Digital Farming School in Côte d'Ivoire

Civil Society Organizations and Networks

- In Honduras, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT worked with Rikolto to build multisectoral capacity around the human right to food, delivering training and tools to local governments and NGOs.
- These stakeholders have also led and been engaged in multistakeholder platforms and initiatives. The 'Better Food Future' initiative, led by Wholechain, a science and technology based- organization, serves as a hub for promoting collective action. In India, events like the 'Ladakh Agrithon' focused on post-harvest innovation and food technology, with the contribution of regional development agencies and startups, illustrate how these platforms foster knowledge sharing and collaborative innovation. Similarly, in Hungary, food waste valorization initiatives—such as transforming agricultural waste into carbon quantum dots—were shared on national platforms and within research networks, showcasing collaborative innovation for circular economy solutions.

Similarly, national research institutions have collaborated with FAO and CGIAR centres to trial and scale nutritionally sensitive, climate-resilient crop varieties and to contribute to global policy-coherence forums and knowledge-sharing platforms.

Through a collaborative project with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Industry Research and Analysis Centre, the University of Ladakh developed experiential training programmes and guided field visits for students from remote regions, strengthening practical skills in food systems management, microbiology, chemical analysis and laboratory techniques, and even spurring local startup creation.

3.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

This subsection outlines stakeholder-suggested actions to strengthen collaboration with and across key food systems actors. Respondents were asked to describe their approach and priority topics for each actor they aim to collaborate with, including national and local governments, UN agencies, development banks, financial institutions, international CSOs (including NGOs, philanthropic organizations, local communities), private sector entities, academic and research institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Non-Governmental Organizations indicated the following main areas for collaboration:

- Empowering local and national CSOs to strengthen grassroots engagement, through enhanced capacity building, technical assistance and financial support.
- Strengthening policy advocacy and accountability mechanisms and raising awareness among policymakers about the importance of nutrition-sensitive and sustainable food systems.
- Reaching out to governments, groups, and institutions that have not yet been engaged in agroecology, to encourage their participation, to broaden the adoption of agroecological and other sustainable agricultural principles.
- Contributing to the development of smallholder farmers' and other food-value-chain actors' capacities through targeted training, mentorship and resource-sharing. This was highlighted as an area still underrepresented in food systems collaboration frameworks, particularly the need to support the "*missing middle*" of agrifood value chains (including processors, aggregators, and distributors) whose engagement is essential to ensure functional, inclusive and resilient systems.
- Strengthening collaboration with community-based actors such as food banks, through the creation of dedicated multistakeholder platforms, technical assistance and shared impact measurement tools.

Additionally, they reported that future actions should focus on forging robust, multistakeholder partnerships and co-developing joint programmes with national and state governments, UN agencies and international NGOs to drive awareness and implement policies on gender equality, climate resilience, sustainable food systems and agriculture, nutrition and food security, and school feeding.

These stakeholders also identified several key concrete actions to strengthen engagement in global and national dialogues on food systems transformation.



↑ Sri Lanka – Scientists at the Food Research and Development Institute apply tissue culture techniques to improve banana and pineapple production, advancing innovation in food systems.
© FAO/David Blacker

- First, they emphasized the importance of their active participation in high-level forums, such as UNFCCC COP processes and WHO events, to help shape global policies on climate, nutrition and sustainable food systems.
- They also proposed establishing dedicated collaboration platforms that bring together civil society, governments, businesses, researchers and policymakers to align food systems solutions with climate strategies.
- They highlighted the value of participating in advocacy networks and knowledge-sharing initiatives, including the Safe Food Federation, Future Food4Climate, the Green Advocacy Academy and the Food Voices Coalition.

To translate these collaborations into practical outcomes, they suggested designing implementation tools that can adapt and replicate proven policies. Finally, they identified capacity-building efforts—focused on innovative financing models like food-bank revenue systems, voluntary carbon-credit markets and insetting approaches—as essential for mobilizing resources and driving the implementation of sustainable food systems transformation strategies.

A clear set of action-oriented recommendations emerged from the **Business and Industry stakeholder** group to foster greater collaboration, including:

- Establishing a collaborative network of public and private entities to coordinate advocacy efforts around innovative food systems solutions.
- Launching targeted campaigns in partnership with governments to address key challenges such as climate resilience and nutrition security.
- Facilitating national policy dialogues that bring together policymakers and sectoral experts to discuss food and nutrition security.
- Forging strategic partnerships with municipalities to pilot and showcase local agroecology initiatives.

- Increasing youth leadership in food value chain innovation, sustainability and agribusinesses.
- Scaling up concrete implementation examples of how multinational corporations can actively contribute to sustainable food systems.
- Engaging actively with the UN by joining strategic coalitions and regularly reporting on progress toward the SDGs.

The proposed approach from **Education and Academia** stakeholders focuses on:

- Convening and participating in global consultation sessions, collaborating with businesses, research institutes, NGOs and local and national government bodies, to share experiences and strengthen collaborations.
- Offering targeted capacity-building programmes and facilitating access to grant funding;
- Negotiating MoUs that clarify shared objectives;
- Disseminating evidence-based policy briefs and research papers, complete with case studies, to governments and intergovernmental agencies tackling food-system challenges.
- Providing technical expertise and knowledge-sharing resources, such as curriculum development, youth-focused financing mechanisms, and toolkit creation, to support other stakeholders in implementing innovative, sustainable, and locally adapted solutions.
- Securing funds for food-sector incubators and university innovation hubs.
- Establishing academic-mobility programmes to exchange knowledge and best practices.

Farmers and Producers seek to amplify their voices at the global level by participating in government task forces and policy consultations while simultaneously devising collaboration strategies to translate national discourse into local action (e.g. by organizing community-level awareness days). They strive to align their efforts with global food security and climate adaptation goals through engagement in international dialogues with governments, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs, and experts; by contributing to research-based case studies and pilot projects with universities and research institutes. At the local level, they aim to support governments by co-designing climate-smart agriculture policies, contributing to agroforestry and regenerative-agriculture projects, and developing sustainable agri-finance programmes.

Representatives of **Youth** stated that they will continue to leverage existing platforms to engage all actors across the food-system value chain—organizing dialogue sessions and virtual meetings—while forging collaborations with research institutes through targeted knowledge-sharing. Their strategy combines policy advocacy with national and local governments and direct community engagement, partnering with schools and local groups to facilitate knowledge transfer via food-systems training and subsistence-protecting activities, and co-creating community-led actions. They have highlighted the need for technical training (public speaking, languages, leadership, project management) and financial support to enable these proactive initiatives. Finally, drawing on the World Food Forum Kenya's championing of a 'leave no one behind' approach, they aspire to serve as a pipeline for women's and youth agency in food systems and to scale local initiatives for global impact.

CHAPTER 4

UNLOCKING INVESTMENTS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

This chapter presents stakeholders' experiences with mobilizing financial resources to support food systems transformation over the past four years. It explores the successful fundraising strategies stakeholders implemented and the challenges they faced in securing financing for their initiatives. Finally, it includes their recommendations for improving access to funding for different stakeholder groups.

4.1 EXPERIENCE WITH MOBILIZING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Over the past four years, stakeholders have undertaken a variety of initiatives to mobilize financial resources to support food systems transformation. These actions have ranged from targeted fundraising campaigns to strategic partnerships to attract private sector investment and public and donor funding. In particular:

- **Farmers and Producers** have leveraged strategic partnerships to access funding for climate-smart agriculture, while advisory organizations have facilitated connections between funders and grassroots initiatives.
- **Education and Academia** have positioned themselves as strategic partners in food systems financing by engaging with global donor platforms and developing tools to facilitate data-driven funding strategies.
- **Science and Technology** actors have aligned their research proposals with funding opportunities, contributing evidence-based approaches to climate resilience and regenerative agriculture.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations** have employed targeted fundraising and advocacy strategies to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and attract donor investment to grassroots initiatives. For example, the Right to Food Coalition Bangladesh and Kenya reported actively engaging in advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the economic viability of agroecological practices, positioning them as both sustainable and potentially profitable investment opportunities.

- **Investors** have strategically blended public and private finance to fund agrifood SMEs and climate-focused initiatives, positioning themselves as key actors in sustainable food systems financing. Other **Business and Industry actors** have integrated sustainability into their business models, securing corporate funding for food systems projects.
- **Youth organizations** have promoted financial literacy and investment readiness among young food systems actors through targeted training and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Philanthropic Organizations** have channeled resources into youth and women-led enterprises, fostering economic resilience in fragile contexts and supporting emergency response programmes in regions facing acute food insecurity.

The following section provides a comprehensive overview of concrete examples of how diverse stakeholder groups have approached financial resource mobilization within food systems transformation, highlighting targeted actions in climate finance, public funding, strategic partnerships, capacity building and advocacy. By examining these mechanisms, we underscore the specific experience of each stakeholder group.

- **Climate finance and regenerative agriculture**

  Climate finance has emerged as a critical mechanism for supporting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing climate resilience. Organizations like Wayfield Agricultural Technology Pvt. Ltd and The Atlas of Farmers Organization and Union of Agribusiness from Uganda have strategically positioned themselves to attract carbon finance and promote regenerative agricultural practices. By aligning their initiatives with climate finance frameworks, these stakeholders have effectively mobilized resources through carbon credit monetization, climate resilience bonds and climate-smart agricultural programmes.

  Another example comes from the FOLUs, which has mobilized funding through various donors and sub-grant partners to implement activities focused on regenerative agriculture strategies, food loss and waste guidelines and general awareness of food systems pathways for county governments. The Agroecology Coalition has observed growing interest and an alignment of funding priorities from philanthropic, bilateral and multilateral donors toward agroecological food systems transformation. Key initiatives include the Cultivating Change Gathering in Tanzania (2024) and the Agroecology Donors Convening in Rome (2023), both aimed at mobilizing increased investments in agroecology.

  Over the past four years, Bayer has mobilized substantial financial resources to support food systems transformation through its USD160 million Zero Hunger Pledge (2022–2030), focusing on climate-smart seeds, technology access and training for smallholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Additionally, they partnered with The Pula Foundation to provide climate-risk insurance, aiming to extend USD127 million in coverage to 10 million smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia by 2030.

- **Public finance and government programmes**

  Public finance initiatives remain instrumental in bridging financial gaps for small-scale farmers and vulnerable communities. Organizations including international research centres, the IPDR in Kenya and PATH (formerly known as the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health), a global health organization based in the United States of America, have secured multi-year funding from international donors and government programmes, aligning their projects with the SDGs and climate adaptation plans. Another initiative highlighted by multiple stakeholders is the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative. Supported by Germany and IFAD, this initiative successfully mobilized funding to advance agroecological practices in the Himalayan region, with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM Organics International), World Future Council and LI-BIRD, from Nepal, as key actors.

- **Strategic partnerships and hybrid financing**

  Strategic partnerships with private sector entities, NGOs and financial institutions have enabled stakeholders to mobilize diversified funding streams. Organizations like Wayfield Ag, the GFN and IPDR have adopted blended finance models and outcome-based financing schemes to attract investment for agroecological initiatives and climate-smart projects. In the case of GFN, these approaches support food recovery programmes that generate both social and environmental impact, including reduced hunger and methane emissions. These partnerships have also facilitated technical assistance, capacity building and market linkages for smallholder farmers and SMEs. The ClimateShot Investor Coalition (CLIC) has further demonstrated the potential of blending public and private capital by facilitating investment readiness for agrifood SMEs, particularly those focusing on climate resilience and adaptation. Rather than directly disbursing finance, CLIC plays a facilitative role through programmes such as the Agrifood Investment Connector, which provides tailored business support, impact assessments and investment matchmaking for SMEs operating in Africa and Latin America. These efforts aim to bridge the gap between high-potential agrifood enterprises and aligned investors. In addition to technical assistance, CLIC convenes investor action groups and produces knowledge products - such as *The Landscape of Climate Finance for Agrifood Systems 2025* - to map funding flows, identify financing gaps and promote innovation in blended finance instruments, including guarantees and insurance. Their experience underscores that unlocking investments for food systems transformation requires not only capital but also coordination, technical support and increased transparency.

- **Capacity Building and Institutional Development**

  Capacity-building is crucial for enhancing stakeholders' ability to access and manage funding effectively. Stakeholders, such as PATH and IPDR, have implemented targeted training programmes to strengthen financial literacy, proposal development and climate finance readiness. By investing in institutional development, these initiatives have increased stakeholders' capacity to secure both public and private funding for sustainable food systems projects.

- **Women and Youth-Centred Programmes**

  Empowering women and youth through targeted financial support and capacity-building initiatives has proven effective in fostering inclusive food systems transformation. Programmes by IPDR and Food for Life Nepal, in collaboration with WFP, have provided microfinance, entrepreneurship training and market access to young agripreneurs and women-led agricultural SMEs. Agrifood Hackathon initiatives have further developed investment readiness for climate finance platforms such as Financing Locally-Led Climate Change Action, Gren Climate Fund (GCF) and WWF.

- **Humanitarian Response and Food Resilience**

  In conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable regions, stakeholders have employed multisectoral approaches to integrate humanitarian response with long-term food resilience, particularly in fragile and complex contexts with rising levels of acute food insecurity. PATH and the RSDA together with FAO have mobilized emergency funding while simultaneously promoting climate-adaptive agricultural practices and sustainable food systems recovery in Lesotho. A civil society actor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, founder of the social enterprise Société SOMMAC, drew attention to the disconnect between the region's vast agricultural potential and the scale of food insecurity affecting millions. The representative emphasized the need for sustained investment strategies that address all pillars of food security and integrate nutrition as a central component, calling for long-term, systemic financing to unlock the region's latent potential for food sovereignty.

- **Academic and Research Initiatives**

  The WUR and the University of Ladakh have mobilized resources for food systems innovation by aligning research initiatives with donor priorities and global financing frameworks. These institutions have piloted scalable models, promoted circular-economy innovations and fostered collaborations with government programmes and local enterprises. Notably, the University of Ladakh has leveraged participation in national competitions and industry partnerships to attract interest from local entrepreneurs and position its initiatives for potential climate finance opportunities.

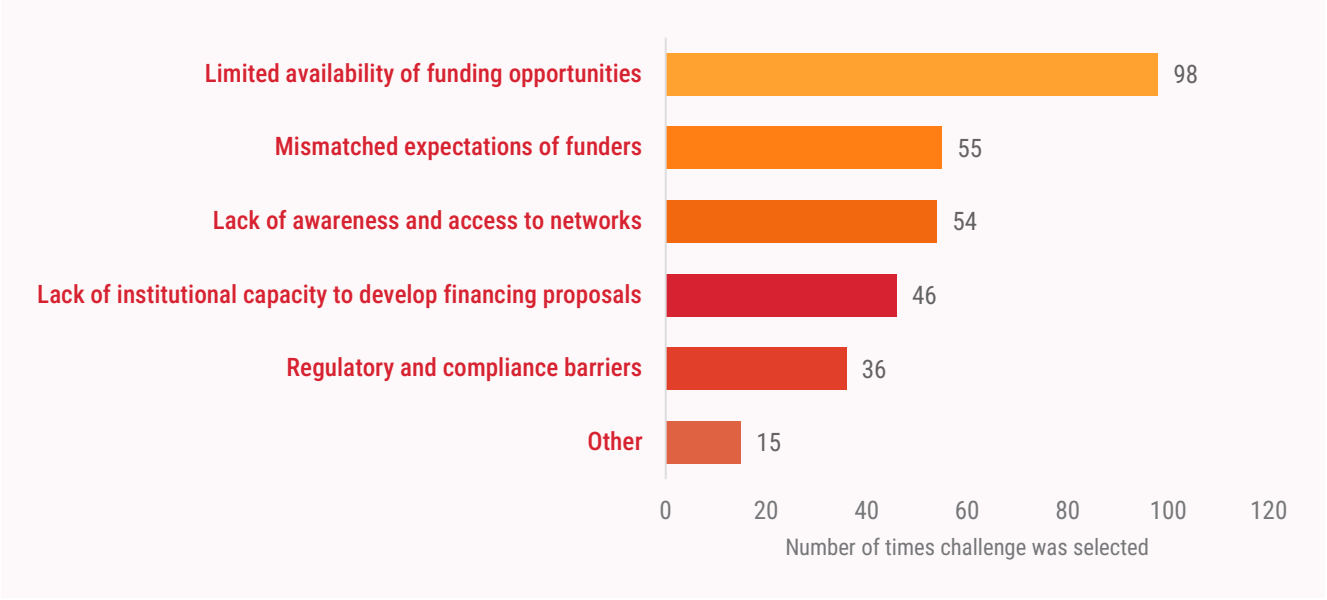
- **Networking and participation in global events**

  Global forums and events provide stakeholders vital opportunities to showcase initiatives, build strategic alliances, attract investment and advocate for stronger food systems and climate resilience. Platforms such as the UN Food Systems Summit and the European Vegan Summit have been instrumental in promoting inclusive financing models and amplifying marginalized voices in funding dialogues. For instance, CoFTI in India emerged as a direct outcome of financial mobilization efforts launched during the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. Similarly, the GCF has served as a key global investment platform for organizations to align their initiatives with climate finance frameworks.

4.2 CHALLENGES IN SECURING FINANCING FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES

FIGURE 13

Main challenges stakeholders face in mobilizing funding for actions related to food systems transformation



Note: This figure illustrates the main challenges stakeholders face in mobilizing funding for actions related to food systems transformation. The x-axis shows the total number of times each engagement option was selected. Stakeholders could select multiple options to reflect the full range of their challenges.

Despite efforts to mobilize financial resources for food systems transformation, stakeholders encountered several key challenges that hindered their capacity to access funding effectively. While these challenges vary across stakeholder groups, they reveal common structural and contextual barriers.

- **Limited availability of funding opportunities**: A predominant challenge mentioned was the limited availability of funding opportunities, identified by 32 percent of respondents. Organizations noted difficulties in accessing diverse funding streams, particularly those oriented towards long-term, systemic transformation in food systems. A senior researcher from Belgium emphasized that civil society actors and independent researchers working on accountability in food systems face chronic underfunding. While large investments target production and innovation, little support goes to initiatives examining corporate influence or regulatory capture - areas seen as politically sensitive but essential for systemic change. She also noted that complex donor frameworks and narrow funding categories often exclude civil society actors and independent researchers despite their critical role.
- **Funding priorities and mismatched expectations from funders** (18 percent of respondents): Respondents highlighted that donor funding tends to prioritize short-term relief or narrowly defined programmatic areas,

creating a gap for initiatives that integrate multisectoral approaches or target systemic change. For example, one organization noted that *"food systems as a concept is still not widely recognized or prioritized by donors*," making it challenging to position proposals effectively. Organizations noted that donor priorities do not always align with local needs, leading to the rejection of well-crafted proposals that fail to meet specific donor priorities, limiting the scope for innovative or context-specific project designs. Respondents indicated that many donors focus primarily on humanitarian food access, neglecting recovery-oriented food systems transformation initiatives. This donor bias toward immediate food relief has significant implications for initiatives that implement longer-term, systemic change. For instance, several respondents mentioned that "*donors are fully booked", "food security is not prioritized*," and that "*funding space is shrinking, making competition more intense*". Finally, some respondents highlighted broader systemic challenges, including shifting donor priorities and the fragmentation of available funding streams. One noted that organizations relying solely on self-financing face challenges in scaling up, underscoring the need for more predictable, multi-year funding mechanisms.

- **Lack of awareness and access to networks**: This was another recurring theme, reported by 18 percent of respondents. Many smaller organizations reported a struggle to penetrate established funding networks or gain visibility among major donors, resulting in missed funding opportunities. Access to information is also a critical concern, as some respondents stated that information on grant opportunities is often behind paywalls, limiting access for smaller organizations. Persistent barriers in accessing financing platforms, including limited institutional capacity for proposal development.

- **Internal organizational challenges including the lack of institutional capacity** to develop compelling financing proposals, especially by smaller organizations and those operating in conflict-affected or low-resource contexts (15 percent). For many grassroots organizations, limited technical capacity and workforce constraints impede their ability to draft compelling proposals or navigate complex funding mechanisms and limit capacity to scale operations. As one respondent put it, "*Grants seem designed for professional grant writers, reducing accessibility for smaller actors*." This capacity gap is further exacerbated by donor expectations for comprehensive, data-driven proposals, creating additional barriers for organizations with limited financial or technical resources.

↓ **Senegal – A shopkeeper at the Bousra Ndawène pastoral shop, supports pastoralist communities by improving access to essential goods and services in the Sahel.**
© FAO/Sylvain Cherkaoui



- **Regulatory and compliance barriers** (12 percent of respondents) These include restrictive donor requirements, complex reporting structures and compliance frameworks that disproportionately impact smaller organizations with limited administrative capacity. Some organizations noted that compliance and registration challenges hinder their ability to access specific funding streams, particularly those tied to international donors or larger, institutional grant-makers. Furthermore, a representative from the Global Dairy Platform underscored that prolonged granting and review processes delay timely access to funding, especially in the food systems space — which continues to receive an inadequate proportion of global financing, particularly for climate-related initiatives.

Beyond these five primary challenges, the questionnaire also revealed several emerging themes that extend beyond the conventional funding barriers. Among these are systemic barriers and structural issues such as:

- The tendency for funders to focus on specific food system components rather than comprehensive, multisectoral approaches. Respondents noted that this segmentation "*creates gaps for cross-sectoral business or multistakeholder collaborations as initiatives which require integration across sectors struggle to secure funding under narrowly defined programmatic areas";*
- A broader conceptual challenge is that many donors, governments and others still focus on food and nutrition security and rural economic development and are not interested in or do not know how to integrate systems thinking. One respondent stating, *"Funders have very often a focus on specific details, focusing on food system components or specific agroecosystems and tend to not allow more comprehensive systemic work."*
- Other emerging themes include market and sector-specific limitations, such as the exclusion of the private sector from early-stage project design, low technological capacity (and specifically a lack of AI-supported technology) and difficulties in coordinating joint proposals across sectors.

Collectively, these challenges underscore the complex funding landscape that stakeholders must navigate to effectively mobilize resources for food systems transformation. Addressing these barriers will require targeted strategies to not only expand funding opportunities but also align donor priorities with the systemic nature of food systems work.

> "WHERE SUCH FUNDING CAN BE UNLOCKED, FOOD SYSTEMS NEED EXPEDITED PROCESSES TO ALLOW FOR CHANGE TO HELP ON THE GROUND — INCLUDING THE FARMERS, RANCHERS AND PASTORALISTS WHO NEED IT MOST.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO UNLOCK FINANCING FOR STAKEHOLDERS' INITIATIVES

Several strategic recommendations have emerged to mitigate existing challenges and create new opportunities for stakeholders to mobilize financial resources for food systems transformation effectively address the funding challenges identified by stakeholders.

- **Strengthening partnerships and collaboration**: Stakeholders emphasized the importance of establishing consortia, joint ventures and multistakeholder platforms to enhance collective fundraising capabilities. Public-private partnerships were highlighted as effective mechanisms for co-developing systemic solutions that align with donor priorities while fostering cross-sectoral collaboration. Additionally, collaboration with academic institutions was suggested to enhance the technical quality of funding proposals and increase the likelihood of successful funding applications.
- **Innovative financing mechanisms**: Expanding access to blended finance, carbon credits and payment for ecosystem services emerged as key strategies for attracting new funding streams. Developing outcome-based financing models and social impact bonds can provide financial sustainability while promoting accountability and measurable impact. Stakeholders also proposed leveraging crowdfunding, microfinance and impact investment platforms to support community-level initiatives, particularly in regions with limited donor engagement.
- **Capacity building and institutional support**: Building institutional capacity to effectively navigate funding landscapes emerged as crucial. Respondents suggested targeted capacity-building programmes focused on grant writing, financial management and monitoring and evaluation. Establishing mentorship programmes for women and youth in food systems was also recommended to foster leadership and enhance technical competencies in resource mobilization.
- **Policy advocacy and alignment with national/global priorities**: Aligning food systems initiatives with national development plans, NDCs and National Adaptation Plans can position them as strategic entry points for accessing climate finance and other funding streams. Respondents also advocated for integrating food systems transformation into national agendas, thereby increasing visibility and potential funding allocations.
- **Data-driven impact measurement and communication**: Developing robust impact measurement frameworks to capture the environmental, social and economic benefits of food systems interventions was underscored as a critical need. Enhanced impact reporting can be a powerful tool to attract donor funding, particularly for initiatives that demonstrate clear, data-driven outcomes. Additionally, building organizational capacity in strategic communication can amplify success stories and position food systems initiatives as compelling investment opportunities.
- **Focus on Youth and Women's empowerment**: Targeted funding for youth and women-led enterprises was identified as a priority. Respondents suggested creating dedicated grant windows for women and youth innovators engaged in climate-smart agriculture and food systems transformation. Capacity-building programmes focused on financial literacy, investment readiness and business development were also recommended to facilitate their access to funding.

Insights from the UNFSS+4 Youth Preparatory Meeting reinforced the need for youth-dedicated, long-term funding mechanisms. Participants recommended simplified application processes and greater flexibility in financing terms to better reach grassroots youth organizations. They also reiterated the importance of sustained investment in capacity building, focusing on grant writing, programme design and financial management. Furthermore, youth representatives urged funders to align financing priorities with the systemic and locally grounded nature of food systems transformation -particularly by supporting agroecology and Indigenous food systems approaches.

- **Expanding access to climate and environmental funds**: Respondents underscored the need to align agroecological and regenerative agriculture projects with climate finance mechanisms, such as the GCF, the Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility. Additionally, exploring bond mechanisms and biodiversity funds can open new funding pathways for climate-adaptive food systems interventions, with emphasis on resilience programmes, GHG reduction initiatives and innovation-driven solutions as key entry points for unlocking such funding. In this context, food recovery was mentioned as a climate intervention. To increase access to climate finance, GFN recommended using standardized metrics, such as the FRAME methodology, to quantify both nutritional outcomes and reduced emissions from redirecting food loss and waste. They also proposed simplifying eligibility requirements, supporting monitoring, reporting and verification systems for food recovery programmes and exploring fiscal incentives and carbon insetting models to mobilize private sector investment. These mechanisms can help integrate food banks into national climate strategies and expand their role within blended finance frameworks.
- **Promotion of agroecology and sustainable food systems**: Agroecology was highlighted as a promising framework for attracting climate finance and other environmentally focused investments. Demonstrating the Return on Investment of agroecological approaches, particularly through impact assessment frameworks, was cited as a strategy to attract private sector engagement and philanthropic funding.
- **Leveraging global platforms and networks**: Global platforms such as the UN Food Systems Summit, FAO events and World Bank forums were identified as key venues for increasing the visibility of food systems initiatives. Engaging in these platforms can foster strategic partnerships, attract investment and align local initiatives with broader global agendas.
- **Local and regional financing opportunities**: Exploring funding opportunities at the local and regional levels was emphasized as a complementary strategy to international donor engagement. Respondents recommended identifying regional funds and collaborating with local governments to integrate food systems projects into national and subnational budgets, thus creating more sustainable funding streams.

CHAPTER 5

THE UNFSS+4 AND BEYOND: EXPECTATIONS AND PRIORITIES

This chapter explores the types of discussions, key actors and topics stakeholders are most interested in during the UNFSS+4 and their expectations from it. It also presents expectations on how the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub can enhance engagement with and across Stakeholders post-UNFSS+4. Finally, it explores how the UNFSS+4 outcomes could be effectively linked to other global initiatives and Stakeholder priorities for the post UNFSS+4 and support expected from national governments.

5.1 EXPECTATIONS FROM THE UNFSS+4

The UNFSS+4, taking place four years after the initial Summit, carries significant expectations across the various stakeholder groups. A recurring theme is the desire for a critical assessment of progress and stated commitments on food systems transformation, as well as the anticipation that the Stocktake will provide clearer action plans for implementing national transformation pathways, supported by a more robust and rigorous monitoring and accountability framework.

As far as the preferred discussion formats are concerned, those identified by the stakeholders in general include:

- Thematic and multistakeholder action sessions: Multistakeholder dialogues focused on financing mechanisms, policy roadmaps and regenerative practices, along with thematic sessions targeting specific focus topics such as climate adaptation, indigenous food systems and the circular economy.
- High-level panels and ministerial roundtables: Engagement with global and national policymakers to co-create actionable solutions.
- Networking forums & bilaterials: Matchmaking opportunities with investors, businesses and impact-driven organizations.
- Innovation showcases: Presentations of technological solutions for soil regeneration, climate resilience and agrifood supply chains; more broadly, these sessions could also serve as platforms for sharing experiences, highlighting both successes and challenges in food systems transformation.

Farmers and Producers: expressed a strong interest in connecting with financial and insurance organizations, including Multilateral Development Banks and investors. They are also keen to engage with leading agribusiness companies such as Nestlé, Unilever and PepsiCo; governments and policymakers; academic and research institutions; technology and innovation hubs; and civil society actors like Slow Food, YPARD (Young Professionals for Agricultural Development), SEATINI, alongside groups of Indigenous Peoples and agricultural and fishing communities.

Their key areas of interest for discussion include:

- The role of modern agricultural practices in enhancing food systems' sustainability and ensuring access to healthy and affordable food, with a specific focus on nutrition and child health.
- Regenerative and climate-smart agriculture, including climate finance.
- Empowerment of small-scale producers through fair pricing, risk mitigation and digital tools.
- The development of public-private partnerships.

Examples of concrete expectations for the UNFSS+4 expressed by Farmers and Producers

- Discussions on access to financing, underscoring the need for increased funding opportunities for farmers.
- Establishment of clear monitoring systems and accountability frameworks.
- Critical assessment of progress, moving from commitments to concrete action, with replicable, scalable initiatives focused on piloting climate-smart agriculture, regenerative practices and agroecological models prioritizing soil health.
- Establishing long-term partnerships between governments, the private sector, startups, and civil society is also prioritized, aiming to foster scalable, action-oriented collaborations.
- An alignment of the UNFSS+4 outcomes with global climate and health agendas, with farmers/producers advocating for the promotion of natural, minimally processed foods such as eggs, fish, fruits and vegetables, in response to the increasing prevalence of ultra-processed products, which they associate with rising rates of chronic disease.
- Elevation of the value of traditional knowledge and reinforce the importance of local control over seeds, natural resources and land, with health and planetary well-being placed at the forefront. This includes advocating for the rights of farmers, fishers, pastoralists and agricultural families.
- Transparency and a clear strategic direction in the UNFSS process are also key expectations, along with greater cooperation and active engagement from governments.



↑ **Ukraine – Zaporizhzhia Bakery No. 5 exemplifies the resilience of the business and industry sector in food systems, continuing bread production during conflict, and sustaining food access and local livelihoods.**
© FAO/Anastasiia Borodaienko

Business and Industry: expressed significant interest in engaging with financial and insurance organizations, particularly Multilateral Development Banks. Additionally, these stakeholders are keen to engage with governments and policymakers to identify areas where private sector involvement could be most impactful, as well as with local communities to implement concrete initiatives focused on food security and climate change mitigation. Other emerging topics of interest include global issues such as childhood malnutrition, hidden hunger and the challenges posed by an aging global population.

Business and Industry actors expect the UNFSS+4 to:

- Centre on creating strategic dialogue spaces with national and regional governments, as well as intergovernmental organizations, to identify where and how the private sector can effectively contribute to the implementation of national pathways;
- Emphasize their role in unlocking private investments in food systems transformation solutions. A stronger role for the private sector is desired, with a broader representation of food systems actors of various sizes and from diverse geographical areas as well as those working in health, education, trade and environment to be present in plenary sessions, side events, and alongside NGOs and UN representatives, to help scale up relevant policies, programmes and initiatives.
- to address the '*middle hidden*' segment of food value chains, especially by food processing and transformation actors. The objective is to leverage this segment's potential to strengthen resilience, accelerate decarbonization and ensure food security at global, regional and national levels;
- translate discussions into tangible projects or policies that secure adequate financial flows to SMEs.

Civil Society Organizations: seek to engage with various stakeholders, beyond financial institutions, to address topics primarily centred on agroecology and climate-resilient food systems.

Key actors they aim to connect with include:

- Standards organizations and quality infrastructure institutions that have developed or are implementing sustainable certification frameworks within agrifood systems.
- Governments, international organizations, private sector actors and research institutions to discuss strategies for scaling agroecology, financing sustainable food systems and promoting policy reforms.
- Policymakers focused on regulatory frameworks to reduce food loss and waste through food recovery and redistribution initiatives.
- Multilateral financial institutions sensitive to social and climate issues, exploring innovative financing mechanisms.

The other topics they are most interested in discussing include investments in agroecological approaches, resource reallocation and the development of monitoring systems to track investment progress over time. One highlighted tool is the Agroecology Finance Assessment Tool, developed by the Agroecology Coalition. It was mentioned as a key instrument to advocate for increased investments in agroecology and to monitor the trajectory of such investments over time. Focus areas also include regenerative agriculture, agrobiodiversity, food loss and waste reduction, healthy diets, youth and gender empowerment, and climate action. A significant expectation expressed by these stakeholders is the desire for inclusive discussions that amplify the voices of frontline actors, including farmers, fishers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and Indigenous Peoples.

CSO's expectations from UNFSS+4 cover several key areas.

- Foremost is the call to see tangible progress in countries' commitments on transforming their food systems.
- Another priority is to elevate the visibility of agroecology, particularly among stakeholders who have not yet been fully engaged, while amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups such as SMEs, fishers and small organizations from the Global South.
- Inclusive and equitable transformation, with a strong call for deliberations and commitments that prioritize vulnerable and marginalized communities. There is also a push for more discussions that celebrate grassroots experiences, traditional knowledge and best practices, reinforcing local solutions to global challenges.
- Discussions on healthy diets and nutrition. However, while some respondents advocate for increased promotion of plant-based diets, other stakeholders stress the need for dietary recommendations to be context-specific and nutritionally adequate, particularly in regions where diverse dietary options may be limited.
- Additionally, there is hope that the event will yield concrete commitments to increased financing, alongside clearer pathways for accessing public and private resources dedicated to climate adaptation and food security.
- The development of further multistakeholder platforms aimed at implementing agroecological roadmaps, mobilizing resources to scale sustainable practices and enhancing progress monitoring and reporting.

- Moreover, they underscore the importance of integrating a human rights-based approach, particularly the right to food, into food systems discourse.
- Stronger policy alignment is also anticipated to incorporate pastoralist food systems into national and global food security frameworks.

Through the *Stakeholder Notes (2025)* from the UNFSS+4 regional meetings **Youth and Women** express clear expectations around long-term engagement models. These include meaningful collaboration with governments, UN agencies and local institutions, with an emphasis on structured participation, policy dialogue and access to financing and knowledge-sharing platforms beyond symbolic inclusion.

Youth and Women expect to be more meaningfully integrated into decision-making processes, fostering global collaboration for better exchanges of technical and educational resources and actively involving young people in achieving the SDGs. However, while the stakeholder questionnaire acknowledges this need, it received only limited input directly from youth and women's organizations. In contrast, more detailed and structured expectations emerge from two regional submissions prepared in the lead-up to UNFSS+4.

In both the *Youth Report – Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting for UNFSS+4* and the *Youth Submission for the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting*, **Youth** organizations express clear expectations toward the UNFSS+4 as a milestone to consolidate political will and secure long-term structural commitments for food systems transformation. The African report frames the Stocktake as an opportunity to develop a unified continental position on inclusive finance, youth empowerment and innovation, and to mobilize national governments and international institutions to support the implementation of national convergence strategies and transparent accountability frameworks.

↓ **Lebanon – At 19, Jana Al-Houri represents the role of youth in shaping safer and more sustainable food systems, preparing a traditional Lebanese breakfast after completing her studies in occupational health and safety.**
© FAO/Marwan Tahtah



Meanwhile, youth representatives from Asia-Pacific highlighted the need for UNFSS+4 to amplify regional priorities around intergenerational justice, decent work and climate-resilient agriculture. They call for stronger integration of food systems transformation into countries' NDCs under the Paris Agreement, and for greater alignment between UNFSS+4 commitments and international climate forums such as COP30. Across both documents, UNFSS+4 is seen as a critical platform to reaffirm equity, inclusivity and financing as pillars of national and global food systems policy.

Additional insights emerged from the Preparatory Youth Conference for UNFSS+4:

- Participants stressed the need for the Summit to catalyse lasting institutional change, particularly through institutionalizing youth participation mechanisms at all levels of governance.
- Digital platforms, open-access dashboards and participatory monitoring tools were identified as key enablers for youth engagement, particularly in contexts with limited official data.
- They recommended that youth contributions be institutionalized beyond the UNFSS+4 process through regular engagement in governance platforms, such as the World Food Forum National Chapters, to ensure that intergenerational approaches are embedded not only in vision but also in practice.
- Youth expect the UNFSS+4 deliberations should include more grassroots organizations to bring best practices and successful local initiatives to global and national discussions on inclusive food systems transformation.

Education and Academia and the Science and Technological Community actors aim to connect with:

- Academic and research institutions, to exchange region-specific research and local/traditional knowledge systems.
- Business and Industry to co-develop local incubation models for food innovation.
- UN agencies, such as FAO, UNDP, IFAD, WFP and UNEP to explore opportunities for accessing climate finance and leverage expertise and networks.
- Financial institutions, particularly those focused on climate and sustainable agriculture, such as multilateral and regional development banks, to identify funding opportunities for food systems transformation projects.
- Civil society and social movements, to incorporate the perspectives of local communities and vulnerable groups.

Priority topics include:

- Agroecology and regenerative agriculture, food security and nutrition, climate resilience.
- Climate-resilient post-harvest and processing technologies.
- Circular economy approaches in food systems, including by-product valorization.
- Food entrepreneurship and youth engagement.
- Indigenous and local knowledge, particularly high-altitude food practices, traditional preservation methods, nutrition and crop biodiversity.
- Sustainable financing, including access to funding and monitoring tools.

5.2 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON HOW THE HUB CAN FACILITATE ENHANCED COLLABORATION WITH AND AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

As stakeholders reflect on how the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub could effectively enhance engagement following the UNFSS+4, a recurring need emerges: the need to effectively support the shift from commitment to tangible impact and ensuring greater transparency in tracking and communicating progress in food systems transformation worldwide.

According to **Farmer and Producers,** several strategic actions could be considered to strengthen stakeholder engagement post-UNFSS+4. One key recommendation is to explore the establishment of regional coordination mechanisms, building on existing platforms such as the CFS Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism.

Additionally, creating localized hubs to facilitate ongoing stakeholder discussions beyond high-level global forums is seen as crucial. This could include thematic working groups focused on specific areas (e.g., agroecology, finance, trade policy) for technical cooperation or the development of a Global Knowledge Hub to compile best practices, research and case studies on food systems transformation. Support to expanding partnerships with agricultural enterprises, impact investors and SMEs to implement food systems solutions is another priority, as is promoting coherence across food systems, climate action, biodiversity and trade. Strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms was also noted, with the suggestion that this could be achieved through:

1. Periodic progress reports - establishing a global food systems scorecard to monitor the implementation of UNFSS+4 commitments at the national level.
2. Third-party monitoring and citizen engagement - enabling civil society and independent researchers to contribute to accountability efforts.

It was proposed that to move from commitment to impact, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub should act as a catalyst for action — not only as a discussion platform but also by reinforcing collaboration, accountability and mobilizing financing. Collaborating with multilateral banks (World Bank, IFAD, GCF) to channel investments toward food systems transformation could be a possible approach.

Strengthening private sector participation was also highlighted and suggested that FAO, as host of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, could establish a transparent and well-functioning accreditation system. This would enable private sector stakeholders, including industry associations and farmer organizations, to participate as accredited entities in UNFSS/FAO processes.

Moreover, a mechanism would be needed to allow companies not affiliated with accredited organizations to contribute or participate, ensuring that voices from all actors with relevant expertise, regardless of size, country or supply chain segment, are included.

According to **Business and Industry,** several key actions could effectively strengthen engagement and collaboration in the post-UNFSS+4 phase.

- A primary focus is on building the capacities of emerging young leaders in food systems transformation, equipping them to drive impactful change in the future.
- Transparency and feedback loops are also emphasized as essential components, with a call for regular communication on how stakeholder input is incorporated into decision-making and progress monitoring.
- To sustain ongoing dialogue, the private sector suggests establishing regular multistakeholder exchange sessions that bring together private sector actors, UN entities, national delegations and other interest groups. These sessions could include brief, targeted webinars focused on specific areas of progress, incorporating opportunities for interaction with participants. Drawing from the successful model of the UN Food Systems Dialogues, this approach would foster inclusive and continuous conversations. Similarly, they call for a visible UN Food System Coordination Hub presence in global policy spaces such as COP30, to ensure that food systems remain integrated in multilateral agendas.
- Investment in digital platforms is another key recommendation, enabling ongoing, easily accessible engagement and allowing stakeholders to share knowledge, innovations and progress in real time, not only during global events but as a continuous process.
- The importance of advocating for enabling conditions was emphasized— including both financial and non-financial de-risking mechanisms — to support meaningful private sector engagement and scale transformative solutions.
- Additionally, support the creation of formal, multistakeholder working groups jointly led by private sector representatives is seen as essential for co-designing implementation pathways. This would ensure that private sector expertise and knowledge are integrated from the outset in the development of policies and programmes, aligning efforts with broader food systems transformation goals.
- They called for greater transparency and dedicated funding mechanisms to support the participation of underrepresented groups, and the use of livestreamed, interactive formats of events to expand access.

From the perspective of **Civil Society Organizations,** the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub is urged to place greater emphasis on integrating grassroots voices, knowledge and struggles, particularly **Youth and Women,** not only during the UNFSS+4 but also within broader global and national food systems governance, shifting away from top-down approaches and focusing instead on locally adapted solutions.

Strengthening stakeholder networks, which encompass governments, civil society, businesses, academia and international organizations, also emerges as a key priority. One proposed initiative is the creation of an interactive digital platform functioning as a knowledge hub to share best practices, effective regulatory frameworks and standardized measurement methodologies enabling continuous learning and localized adaptation of solutions.

Additionally, the establishment of permanent thematic working groups, for example on food waste prevention, has been recommended, including representatives from food banks, governments, the private sector and financial institutions, facilitating ongoing dialogue and collaboration beyond major events.

The importance of technical and financial support has been strongly emphasized. This includes capacity building and ensuring that civil society actors at both global and national levels can meaningfully engage with the Hub and

its initiatives, through adequate funding, interpretation services and increased transparency in decision-making processes.

The **Youth** called on the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub to continue acting as a convenor of intergenerational dialogue and innovation and urged stronger alignment of food systems transformation with broader global frameworks, including the Paris Agreement, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Youth Strategy.

Education and Academia and the Science and Technological Community emphasized the importance of inclusivity and representation within the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. This includes introducing a system to monitor stakeholder inclusion, with particular attention to academic institutions, youth, Indigenous Peoples and women-led enterprises. A proposed strategy involves implementing a rotating host country initiative for each region, allowing a designated country to lead engagement and development activities annually or biennially. This approach would also enable SMEs and primary producers to participate more actively in events, rather than prioritizing only governments, major NGOs and large corporations.

Academia also urges the Hub to adopt a more proactive and visible role in food systems transformation processes across all countries. This could be achieved through structured feedback cycles - such as annual consultations, surveys and voluntary progress reviews linked to national food systems pathways - and through stronger coordination between local initiatives and national policy frameworks, particularly by supporting youth-led and community-based actions. In connection with this, there is a recommendation to offer targeted capacity-building programmes to help stakeholders effectively implement and monitor their food systems commitments.

The creation of regional dialogue hubs, in partnership with universities and CSOs, was also proposed to bridge the gap between grassroots efforts and national-level strategies.

In addition, many emphasized the need for the Hub to focus on future food systems governance, ensuring justice and equity. This includes addressing the risks of technocratic solutions that may overlook or exacerbate social inequalities, for example, when climate-smart agricultural technologies increase the workload of women without enhancing their access to land, credit or decision-making power. As noted by an academic expert, ensuring inclusive and culturally respectful approaches requires institutionalizing justice through three interconnected dimensions: recognition of diverse needs and vulnerabilities, redistribution of resources and genuine representation in decision-making spaces.

In terms of actions to foster greater engagement among stakeholders globally, these stakeholders listed several additional actions:

- Establish an online platform/interactive digital hub dedicated to real-time exchanges of best practices, case studies, research and funding opportunities and technical assistance needs.
- Develop regional and thematic working groups that include academic institutions, small producers, Indigenous Peoples' communities and subnational actors. This is particularly important, as local and academic stakeholders often possess contextual knowledge that may be overlooked in national dialogues.
- Organize regular regional or sub-regional meetings to update stakeholders on progress, align efforts and address emerging challenges.

5.3 STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (POST UNFSS+4) AND SUPPORT EXPECTED FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

This section explores the priorities identified by stakeholders for the next five years following the UNFSS+4. It outlines their planned strategies to accelerate food systems transformation, emphasizing the perceived role of national governments in supporting these initiatives. Examples of priority themes and activities are included, along with enabling factors and the resources needed to achieve the stated objectives.

Among representatives of **Farmers and Producers**, the themes of agroecology and enhanced sustainability stand out as priorities, particularly in relation to improving food security and livelihoods. For example, the U.S. Dairy Industry aims to improve agricultural efficiency to support farmers' livelihoods and produce more nutritious dairy products while using fewer natural resources. Similarly, the Spanish business entity INTERPORC, representing the pork industry, outlined its continued advocacy for inclusive, context-specific approaches to sustainability. Both organizations call for stronger public investment and regulatory support to ensure that livestock producers (particularly small and medium-scale producers) are actively included in food systems transitions.

A concrete action of advocacy mentioned was targeting governments during the Himalayan Agroecology Initiative (2025, New Delhi), a high-level conference for launching the agroecological roadmaps of Bhutan, India and Nepal. Farmers and Producers highlighted the importance of strengthening agrifood finance and urged governments to develop programmes that allow farmer organizations and cooperatives to access financing and appropriate services tailored to their specific needs. Finally, they prioritized continued capacity building for Farmers and Producers and institutional partnerships, including collaborations and dialogues with governments.

A central theme from **Business and Industry** stakeholders is the commitment to regenerative agriculture and climate change mitigation, aligning all initiatives with the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. This includes actions aimed at reducing food waste, CO_2 emissions, water consumption and plastic packaging. Among the most concrete requests from Business and Industry stakeholders is for financial incentives from national governments and recognition of the role of the different parts of the value chain in food systems transformation. Tetra Pak explicitly highlights the role of the "*hidden middle*" in food systems transformation. To accelerate the agroecological transition, they asked that governments:

- Establish clear, outcome-based policy and regulatory frameworks that promote innovation, sustainability and public-private collaboration.
- Streamline regulatory approval processes for advanced technologies, such as genome editing, biotechnology, biological crop protection and digital agriculture tools.
- Encourage the adoption of regenerative practices through financial mechanisms like carbon markets or tax incentives tied to measurable environmental outcomes.

- Develop tailored approaches to tackle the challenges posed by poor soils and water scarcity in arid regions through strategic initiatives and community collaboration. This includes a focus on the use of unconventional water sources, introducing crops suited to salinity and marginal lands and exploring advanced agricultural technologies.
- Promote cross-sector partnerships through public-private initiatives that ensure inclusion and transparency, aligning both short- and long-term national agricultural development strategies with clear, outcome-oriented sustainability goals, thereby reinforcing shared accountability for food systems transformation.

For **Civil Society Organizations**, priority actions planned to transform food systems include:

- Promoting equitable and gender-inclusive food systems by emphasizing inclusivity, gender equality, and the integration of traditional (particularly Indigenous) knowledge through de-tribalized, non-discriminatory policies.
- Supporting the implementation of agroecology roadmaps, such as the LI-BIRD project (2024–2029) in Nepal, through cross-sector collaborations and targeted investments.
- Increasing the volume of recovered and redistributed food, addressing food loss and waste across the entire value chain.
- Expanding access to healthy diets in institutional settings such as school cafeterias, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, public offices, universities and workplaces to promote healthier, more sustainable diets.
- Fostering agrifood innovation and youth entrepreneurship by strengthening capacities, improving access to credit and establishing startup incubators in the agrifood sector.

Within this context, national governments are called upon to:

- Define and promote policies that facilitate the inclusion of marginalized communities, recognizing their practices and knowledge in national food systems intervention plans.
- Introduce food donation laws that protect donors and simplify food surplus recovery processes.
- Incorporate food loss and waste reduction into national climate change mitigation strategies, positioning food recovery and redistribution as mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Provide political support to agroecological roadmaps, enhancing coordination across ministries and aligning local plans with national agroecological strategies.
- Engage in multistakeholder exchanges to co-design and monitor policies and actions.
- Highlight *"lighthouse"* examples of territorial partnerships and regulatory frameworks in agroecology, promoting them as case studies and best practices.
- Promote government and donor investments in agroecological initiatives through dedicated financing mechanisms; similarly, stronger political and regulatory support for Climate-Smart Agriculture, including financial incentives and improved access to climate finance and risk mitigation tools.

- Facilitate Youth employment in the agrifood sector by creating training programmes, internships, and hiring incentives.

While the stakeholder questionnaire highlighted a broad range of national-level priorities, additional targeted recommendations for the next five years were jointly put forward by **Youth** representatives across Africa. Co-signed by a coalition that included the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub's SENA Group alongside youth-led platforms such as the World Food Forum Kenya, the Major Group for Children and Youth, the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network, and the East African Community Youth Parliament, these proposals are compiled in the *Key Messages from the Youth* from the Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting for UNFSS+4. Together, these groups articulated a unified vision for inclusive and transformative food systems.

At the core of these recommendations is a direct call to national governments to institutionalize structural inclusion and long-term accountability. Governments are urged to enact legal reforms that guarantee land tenure and resource access for youth and women; to create mentorship and training programmes for youth and women agrifood entrepreneurs; and to ensure formal representation of both groups in national food systems governance, with concrete participation targets. The recommendations also call on governments to design and deploy dedicated financial instruments—including concessional credit lines, credit guarantee schemes, diaspora bonds, and blended finance mechanisms—tailored to support youth- and women-led enterprises.

In addition, youth organizations specifically call for the inclusion of young people in national pilot initiatives under the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub-led *Convergence Initiative,* which focuses on aligning food systems transformation with climate action. Finally, national governments are encouraged to fully embed food systems priorities into their development strategies, with clear timelines, dedicated budget lines and inclusive monitoring frameworks that reflect gender and age equity.

These shared recommendations reflect a coordinated push for structural inclusion, intergenerational equity and gender-responsive governance in the implementation of national food systems pathways.

Similarly, in a set of written inputs addressed primarily to national governments, the *Joint Youth Written Inputs* submitted at the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for UNFSS+4 articulate a set of youth-led recommendations that align closely with those issued by African youth and women organizations, reflecting a shared vision for inclusive and accountable food systems transformation including equitable governance and the mobilization of targeted resources.

While the core messages overlap substantially, several regional nuances emerge. The submission underscores the need to embed food systems transformation within countries' NDCs, linking food policy to climate adaptation and mitigation goals. It calls for expanded climate financing to support smallholder farmers, promote climate-smart agriculture, and mainstream gender equality.

The document also highlights the role of science, technology and innovation (encouraging the use of precision agriculture, mechanization, and artificial intelligence) while advocating for the preservation of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems. Youth also stress the importance of integrating academic research and science communication into food systems policy debates. Finally, similarly to their African colleagues, they also urge

governments to include youth perspectives in national blueprints under the Hub's *Convergence Initiative* reinforcing principles of intergenerational equity, climate justice and decent work within the food system.

Among stakeholders from **Education, Academia, Science and Technology,** priority actions for transforming food systems include launching interdisciplinary research on resilient crops, post-harvest innovations and Indigenous food knowledge. Academic institutions also aim to position themselves as regional hubs for policy studies, youth incubation and technology validation.

Additionally, they seek to develop multistakeholder collaborations involving governments, NGOs, private companies, and multinationals to implement innovative agricultural projects focused on sustainable food systems, nutritional security, seed improvement and climate-smart agriculture.

They plan to direct their advocacy efforts at informing national investors about the importance of financing sustainable agriculture and food systems while encouraging governments to adopt policies responsive to local contexts and the needs of vulnerable groups.

Another key area of their focus for the future is collaboration with private enterprises to foster food innovation, such as co-developing local food brands. Academic institutions also plan to equip rural youth, women and self-help groups with practical skills in food processing, entrepreneurship and hygiene, thereby strengthening local capacities and promoting inclusive development.

Requests to governments include:

- Integrating university faculty and researchers into advisory committees, working groups and national consultations on food systems, climate-resilient agriculture and high-altitude farming, as well as promoting their participation in international conferences and summits.
- Promoting joint research calls focused on traditional food systems, food waste valorization and renewable energy-based food preservation methods
- Strengthening linkages between academia, industry and government by establishing stable public-private collaboration platforms.
- Facilitating stakeholder dialogue and interaction, linking Education, Academia, Science and Technology with local governments, international organizations, and the private sector to adopt an integrated approach to food systems transformation.
- Supporting information and advocacy campaigns aimed at encouraging national investments in sustainable agriculture.

5.4 LINKING THE UNFSS+4 TO OTHER GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Given the critical importance of creating connections across global initiatives, stakeholders were asked to identify ways in which the outcomes of UNFSS+4 could be effectively linked to other global frameworks and efforts. To effectively link the outcomes of UNFSS+4 with other global initiatives, several strategic pathways have been identified.

- First, aligning the outcomes of UNFSS+4 with the Paris Agreement and existing climate action network (given the central role of food systems in addressing climate change). The event can serve as a platform to encourage countries and stakeholders to implement food systems solutions that simultaneously promote climate change mitigation and adaptation. Facilitating cross-sectoral dialogues between food systems actors and climate stakeholders could foster integrated approaches that advance both food security and climate objectives. In this context, WUR called for strengthening the food–water nexus within the UNFSS+4 roadmap. They emphasized the need to move beyond policy silos, noting that water productivity, efficiency and resilience are essential to achieving both food systems goals and broader sustainability objectives.
- Additionally, linking to the One Health approach is vital, considering the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health. By collaborating with relevant organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity, UNFSS+4 can promote holistic food policies that improve public health, protect biodiversity and mitigate environmental degradation.
- Integrating the outcomes of UNFSS+4 into national and global agendas is also essential to ensure that progress in food systems transformation is effectively reflected in voluntary national SDG reports.
- Additionally, dissemination of outcomes through digital platforms and social media, as well as engagement with global research networks (such as the International Panel on Climate Change), can ensure that climate-resilient agricultural research is widely shared and leveraged for impactful implementation.

To maximize impact, stakeholders proposed that the outcomes of UNFSS+4 should be aligned, integrated and operationalized within existing global frameworks, in particular:

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: A global pact aimed at protecting and restoring biodiversity by 2030.
- Global finance and investment mechanisms: Incorporating UNFSS+4 outcomes into the GCF, Adaptation Fund, IFAD and the World Bank financing to secure funding for sustainable food systems transformation.
- Global health goals: Strengthening links with health-oriented initiatives to promote improved nutrition and food security. Furthermore, establishing connections with global health initiatives can bridge food security and public health communities, reinforcing the synergies between nutrition, food security and health outcomes.

CHAPTER 6
WAY FORWARD

The findings presented in this report reveal a complex landscape. While efforts to engage diverse stakeholders in food systems transformation have advanced since the 2023 UN Food Systems Summit, significant structural challenges persist and remain deeply embedded in the UNFSS follow up process.

Despite an increasing number of platforms, dialogues, and strategic communications, stakeholders continue to report limited access to meaningful decision-making spaces, weak accountability frameworks, and persistent disconnect between national policy planning and on-the-ground realities.

The notion of "*transformation*" has become increasingly prominent in policy discourse; however, it seems that its operationalization often remains superficial. There appears to be a persistent misalignment between the strategic narrative of food systems transformation and its translation into national policies and plans.

The 2025 data points to a critical moment, in which urgency, fatigue and aspiration coexist. The reflection and recommendations below, drawing on the previous chapters, aim to support more accountable, inclusive and systemic approaches, grounded in the lived realities and expectations of those driving food systems change worldwide.

1. Reconfigure governance and embed rights-based co-leadership

A central thread across stakeholder contributions is the need for a structural shift—from fragmented consultation processes to inclusive and accountable governance rooted in rights-based co-leadership. Governance must be understood not as the formal architecture of institutions alone, but as the political space in which decisions are shaped, power is distributed, and responsibilities are upheld.

To this end, national governments and coordinating bodies should:

- Establish or strengthen multistakeholder platforms with clear mandates, dedicated resources, and mechanisms for dialogue, joint planning, and monitoring;
- Embed formal youth advisory structures within food systems institutions, supported by equity commitments, independent evaluations, and disaggregated monitoring systems;

- Develop voluntary commitment registries tied to national coordination mechanisms, to enable stakeholder engagement to be tracked over time;
- Define and operationalize the right to food within national legal and policy frameworks;
- Strengthen safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest in decision-making spaces that involve actors with divergent mandates.

While terms like "*inclusion*", "*empowerment*" and "*equity*" are widespread in institutional narratives, stakeholders perceive their implementation uneven and often ornamental. Without clear duty-bearers, time-bound goals, and enforceable mechanisms, these principles risk losing meaning. Embedding rights-based approaches in governance structures— not only in rhetoric —will be essential to ensure legitimacy, sustainability and impact.

2. Operationalize agroecological and context-specific approaches

Stakeholders, particularly farmers and CSOs called for a strategic pivot toward agroecological models. Agroecology was not framed as a marginal or technical option, but as a systemic approach aligned with sustainability, food sovereignty, and socio-economic inclusion.

To translate this vision into action, national food systems strategies should:

↓ South Africa – In Mbombela, packing house workers sort oranges for external defects, ensuring product quality for local and international markets. © FAO/Madelene Cronjé



- Recognize agroecology as a central framework for transformation;
- Support domestic markets, short value chains, and traditional knowledge systems;
- Allocate technical and budgetary resources responsive to local agroecological conditions, particularly in rural and Indigenous territories.

In parallel, many stakeholders noted the absence of consumer-centred approaches in national plans. There is a growing demand for policy tools that address food environments, dietary patterns, and consumption behaviors—essential levers of change often overlooked. Proposals included encouraging a shift away from unhealthy diets and promoting consumption aligned with planetary boundaries. These insights call for a rebalancing of strategies to encompass not only production, but the full complexity of food systems.

3. Foster coherence and accountability across national and global frameworks

Fragmentation is seen as a major barrier to the implementation of food systems transformation. Stakeholders stressed the need for greater coherence between national pathways and global agendas—including climate, biodiversity, human rights and development finance. Yet coherence must be constructed not only at the global level, but through national planning processes, institutional coordination, and mutual accountability.

To address this, national governments and development partners should:

- Embed food systems objectives within existing national frameworks, such as NDCs, climate adaptation plans, nutrition strategies, and social protection systems;
- Harmonize funding streams and responsibilities across ministries and sectors to prevent duplication and silos;
- Strengthen transparency and monitoring mechanisms to track commitments and progress, using accessible public tools and platforms.

Current financing structures—often short-term, fragmented and driven by donor priorities—are misaligned with the long-term, integrated nature of food systems transformation. Stakeholders emphasized the need to structurally align public and private funding with national strategies, community leadership, and cross-sectoral goals. This includes shifting from project-based funding to multi-year, flexible mechanisms that reward systemic approaches and outcomes and enable adaptive implementation. If this alignment is not achieved, food systems efforts risk remaining under-resourced and disconnected from their transformational ambitions.

Coherence is not only a matter of alignment, but also of credibility. Without mechanisms to make plans actionable and visible, the transformative potential of food systems efforts remains aspirational. To ensure that transformation efforts translate into lasting impact, stakeholders emphasized the need for robust accountability and monitoring frameworks across all levels. This includes not only tracking progress against commitments, but also establishing clear responsibilities, participatory oversight mechanisms, and publicly accessible tools for transparency. Building a culture of mutual accountability—grounded in rights, metrics, and continuous feedback—is critical to move from process-driven participation to results-based transformation.

4. Invest in crisis-sensitive and obligation-based transformative frameworks

In fragile and protracted crisis contexts, the limitations of voluntary, fragmented approaches are particularly visible. Stakeholders emphasized the need for coherent national strategies that are obligation-driven and rights-anchored, capable of addressing both immediate needs and long-term systemic change.

To support this shift, stakeholders called for:

- Integrated planning frameworks that link emergency aid with long-term transformation efforts;
- Alignment between national food systems pathways and broader mechanisms such as the SUN Movement or social protection systems;
- Investment in the capacity of civil society and local institutions to engage meaningfully in planning, implementation and monitoring.

Several actors warned that without this structural shift, the growing disconnect between international discourse and lived realities may erode trust, deepen vulnerabilities, and weaken the political viability of food systems transformation efforts.

5. Embed equity as a structural pillar

Equity, including gender equality, intergenerational justice, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities,must be embedded across every stage of food systems transformation. These dimensions are not optional add-ons; they are structural determinants of access, resilience, and justice.

This requires:

- Legal recognition of the rights of marginalized groups;
- Institutional safeguards against discrimination and exclusion;
- Dedicated financial allocation and measurable targets for equity objectives.

Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities continue to experience limited access to productive resources, decision-making spaces, and climate-resilient support systems. These exclusions are not marginal, they are structural and require structural correction.

Beyond the data captured in this report, there is growing evidence that rights-based approaches can be translated into concrete governance mechanisms. Future efforts should take stock of such experiences, drawing lessons from how inclusion, equity and rights can be made operational and measurable within national food systems strategies. Investing in this dimension is not ancillary, it is foundational to resilient and just transformation.

6. Cultivate systemic learning and adaptive capacity

Transformation requires more than plans. It requires the ability to learn, adapt, and evolve. Stakeholders highlighted the need for continuous feedback loops between practice, evidence and policy, enabling food systems actors to reflect, share lessons, and course-correct in real time.

To this end, national and global efforts should prioritize:

- Investment in knowledge-sharing platforms, learning hubs and peer exchange mechanisms;
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation processes that feed back into policy design;
- Stronger linkages between data systems, grassroots knowledge and research evidence.

What emerges from the 2025 findings is not a lack of ideas or commitment, but rather a recurring concern: the persistent gap between discourse and implementation. Despite fatigue, fragmentation and frustration, a wide range of actors continue to show up, speak up, and push for change. This persistence itself is a form of progress. It signals that transformation remains a shared horizon—even when the path ahead is uncertain.

The way forward requires more than renewed ambition. It demands a reconfiguration of governance, a shift in institutional responsibility, and a firm commitment to rights-based, locally grounded solutions. Food systems transformation cannot be driven by process alone. Stakeholders are not asking to be heard; they are asking to be recognized as co-creators of the systems that govern food. This report highlights not only what remains to be done, but how it must be done: by moving from inclusion to co-governance, from vision to implementation, and from promise to responsibility.

↓ Azerbaijan – A young beekeeper and his uncle tend to hives, supporting local honey production and livelihoods through farming.
© FAO/Javid Gurbanov



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFA	Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development
ATNi	Access to Nutrition Initiative
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIWF	Compassion in World Farming International
CLIC	ClimateShot Investor Coalition
CNNCA	Cameroon National Digital Agricultural Knowledge Center
CoFTI	Coalition for Food-System Transforma(c)tion in India
CP-EIR	Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review methodology
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FOLU	Food and Land Use Coalition
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GHG	greenhouse gas
GFN	Global FoodBanking Network
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPDR	Institute of Pastoralism Development and Research
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LI-BIRD	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development
MoUs	Memoranda of Understanding
MDB	Multinational Development Bank
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
NiWAB	Nigeria's Women in Agricultural Business Cooperative Society Limited
OP2B	One Planet Business for Biodiversity
PSM	Private Sector Mechanism
RSDA	Rural Self-Help Development Association
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEATINI	Southern and Eastern Africa Trade, Information and Negotiations Institute
SENA	Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory Group of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
SMEs	small and medium sized enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFSS	UN Food System Summit (2021)
UNFSS+2	The first UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake
UNFSS+4	The second UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake
VFI	Village Farmers Initiative
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WFO	World Farmers' Organisation
WHO	World Health Organization
WUR	Wageningen University & Research

ANNEX 2: UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT + 4 STOCKTAKE (UNFSS+4): INDEPENDENT STAKEHOLDERS' REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please ensure that each organization submits only one response.

Permission to use the information collected in this form

1. The Hub will use this information to inform UNFSS+4 related documents, including updating the Hub's website.

   ☐ The Hub can use the information provided in this questionnaire, including reference to the name of the submitting person/organization.

   ☐ The Hub can use the information provided in this questionnaire but without reference to the name of the submitting person/organization.

2. The information provided in this questionnaire represents (please select the appropriate answer):

   ☐ My personal views

   ☐ The views of my organization

Contact details

3. **Contact details of the person filling in the questionnaire:**

   First Name:

   Last Name:

   Organization:

   Title/function:

   Email:

4. **Gender** (drop down selection: Woman, Man, Non-binary, Prefer not to say):

5. **Contact details of the designated representative organization (if different from the person filling in the questionnaire):**

   First Name:

   Last Name:

   Organization:

   Title/function:

   Email:

6. **Gender** (drop down selection: Woman, Man, Non-binary, Prefer not to say):

7. **Which stakeholder group does your organization represent:**

- ☐ Business and Industry (for profit organizations)
- ☐ Children and Youth
- ☐ Consumers' Organization
- ☐ Education and Academia
- ☐ Farmers/Producers
- ☐ Indigenous Peoples Organizations
- ☐ Local Communities
- ☐ Philanthropic Organizations
- ☐ Science and Technology
- ☐ Women's Organizations
- ☐ Workers and Trade Unions
- ☐ Other, please specify:_____

8. **What is your organization's geographic area of operation?**

- ☐ Global
- ☐ Regional
- ☐ National
- ☐ Local

9. **Which region**

- ☐ Africa
- ☐ Asia Pacific
- ☐ Europe and Central Asia
- ☐ Near East and North Africa
- ☐ Latin America and the Caribbean

10. **Which country?** (drop down list provided)

Section A: Reflecting on the progress towards food system transformations

Stakeholder engagement in food systems transformation

11. **How familiar are you with your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan)? Please find information here for reference.**

- ☐ Very familiar
- ☐ Somewhat familiar
- ☐ Not familiar

12. In your experience, does your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) adequately consider the perspectives and priorities of your stakeholder group?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No / partially (please explain): _____

13. How have you/your organization been engaged in the implementation of your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) and/or in other national, regional or global food systems transformation initiatives in the past four years? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Participation in national dialogues
- ☐ Design/development of the national food systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ Revision/adaptation of the national food systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ Implementation of the national food systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ Monitoring/evaluation of the national food systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ Capacity building and training
- ☐ Public awareness raising
- ☐ Communication and advocacy efforts around the national food systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ Piloting or scaling up sustainable food system initiatives
- ☐ Resource mobilization for the implementation of the national food Systems transformation pathway or similar national food systems plan
- ☐ In the context of high-level intergovernmental meetings (e.g., ECOSOC, HLPF, RFSD, CFS, others.)
- ☐ Other, please explain:_____

14. Which channels have you found most effective for your engagement in food systems transformation? (Rank from most to least effective)

- ☐ Multistakeholder platforms
- ☐ Dedicated consultations/workshops
- ☐ Surveys/feedback Mechanisms

- ☐ Direct engagement with National Convenors
- ☐ Virtual events organized by the UN food Systems Coordination Hub

15. Please specify other channels you have found effective: _____

16. **Do you feel your organization's contributions have been reflected in policy and decision-making processes related to food systems transformation?**

    - ☐ Yes, consistently
    - ☐ No / partially (please explain): _____

17. **In your/your organization's opinion, is the implementation of your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) achieving the expected results?**

    - ☐ Yes, it is on track to achieve its planned results.
    - ☐ Partially
    - ☐ Too early to assess
    - ☐ Not aware/no opinion
    - ☐ No, it is not on track to achieve the expected results. Please explain:_____

18. If yes, please explain what actions you think are working successfully:

19. **Please provide a short narrative on the concrete actions your organization has taken to support the implementation of your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) and/or other national/regional/global actions related to food systems transformation in the past four years.** Please describe areas where your inputs significantly influenced the implementation of these processes.

20. **Please give examples of positive actions other food systems actors took in the past four years that included cooperation with your organization to advance food systems transformation at local/sub-national, national, regional or global level.**

Challenges

Based on your experience, what are the persistent challenges for your organization and/or stakeholder group in effectively engaging with other food systems actors. Please provide your answer for each stakeholder group you have worked with or wish to work with.

21. **What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with the national government? (Select all that apply)**

    - ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
    - ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
    - ☐ Lack of information/awareness

- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

22. Please provide details on your experience:___

23. What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with local governments? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

24. Please provide details on your experience:____

25. What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with the UN System? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Difficulties obtaining travel visas
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

26. Please provide details on your experience:____

27. What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with multilateral development banks, regional development banks, national financiers, etc.? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

28. Please provide details on your experience:___

29. **What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with regional integration organizations (e.g. EU, African Union, ASEAN, etc.)? (Select all that apply)**

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

30. Please provide details on your experience:___

31. **What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with international NGOs? (Select all that apply)**

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

32. Please provide details on your experience:____

33. What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with multinational corporations? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

34. Please provide details on your experience:_____

35. What are the main challenges your organization has faced in engaging with small and medium enterprises? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

36. Please provide details on your experience:_____

37. What are the main challenges your organization has facing in engaging with academic and research institutions? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Insufficient engagement opportunities
- ☐ Lack of clarity on engagement mechanisms
- ☐ Lack of information/awareness
- ☐ Bureaucratic or administrative barriers to participating in decision-making processes
- ☐ Insufficient funding
- ☐ Insufficient capacity
- ☐ Lack of inclusivity or representation
- ☐ Barriers to entry (e.g., PhD requirements to participate)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

38. Please provide details on your experience:_____

Recommendations for improvements

39. **How could your organization or stakeholder group improve its engagement in the implementation of your country's national pathway for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) and/or in regional or global food systems transformation efforts?**

40. **How could other food systems actors engage more effectively with your organization? What engagement methods would you find most valuable** (e.g., national dialogues, capacity building, advisory or working groups, surveys, etc.)?

Section B: Strengthening accountability

41. **Do you/your organization agree with the values and objectives outlined in your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan)?**

    ☐ Not aware

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No/partially: please explain:

42. **Does your organization have a clear strategy for engaging with the public sector and other food systems actors in relation to the implementation of your country's national pathway document for food systems transformation (or a similar national food systems plan) and/or other efforts for food systems transformation?**

    ☐ No

    ☐ Yes. Please describe the strategy or provide a weblink:

43. **Does your organization have specific, time-bound and measurable commitments and a related monitoring tool/mechanism to support national, regional or global food systems transformation efforts and how has such a tool/mechanism been used?**

    ☐ No

    ☐ Yes, please describe and provide evidence (weblink, etc.):

44. **What concrete action have you/your organization taken to ensure collaboration and coordination with other organizations of your stakeholder group and/or other stakeholder groups to influence food systems transformation efforts at the national, regional or global level? List the 3 most important actions/achievements.**

45. **What specific actions can your organization take to strengthen engagement with different food systems actors? Please describe your approach for each actor you aim to collaborate with (e.g., national government, local governments, UN System, multilateral or regional development banks, national financiers, regional integration organizations, other international intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, multinational corporations, small and medium enterprises, academic and research institutions, others).**

46. **What are the priority activities your organization is planning to undertake to support food systems transformation in your country, region or globally during the next five years as a follow-up to the UNFSS+4?**

47. **How could the national government support you/your organization in implementing these activities?**

Section C: Unlocking investments for food systems transformation

48. **In the past 4 years, what specific actions has your organization taken to mobilize public or private financial resources in support of food systems transformation? Has your organization leveraged global initiatives to access opportunities for investment, and in which specific areas, e.g. climate finance, etc.**

49. **What are the main challenges your organization has been facing in mobilizing funding for actions related to food systems transformation? (Select all that apply)**

    - ☐ Regulatory and compliance barriers
    - ☐ Lack of awareness and access to networks
    - ☐ Limited availability of funding opportunities
    - ☐ Mismatched expectations of funders
    - ☐ Lack of institutional capacity to develop financing proposals
    - ☐ Other (please specify):

50. Please provide further details on your experience:_____

51. **In your opinion, what are some ways your stakeholder group could get more funding to help transform food systems?**

Section D: Roadmap beyond UNFSS+4

52. **Considering the three main topics of UNFSS+4—reflecting on progress, strengthening accountability, and unlocking financing—which other food system actors would you like to connect with during the event? Additionally, what types of discussions would you prefer, and what topics would you or your organization be interested in exploring with other food system actors?**

53. **What are your/your organizations' expectations from the UNFSS+4 and beyond?**

54. **In your opinion, in what ways can the UNFSS+4 and its outcomes be effectively linked to other global initiatives?**

55. **How could the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub enhance engagement with Stakeholders following the UNFSS+4?**

56. **Are there any other inputs or ideas you would like to share?**

ANNEX 3: STAKEHOLDERS' CHALLENGES IN ENGAGING WITH OTHER FOOD SYSTEMS ACTORS

Challenges in engaging with national governments

- Within **Farmers and Producer organizations**, the top challenge is the scarcity of meaningful engagement opportunities—farmer cooperatives find themselves shut out of decision-making forums by opaque participation rules and last-minute notifications. Bureaucratic and administrative bottlenecks were also noted as a challenge, including lengthy approval procedures, rigid hierarchies, and long-term projects which are slow to scale and adapt innovation. IFOAM Organics International, which operates globally, noted that governments often treat agroecology initiatives as isolated pilot projects rather than components of a long-term strategic vision. This limited perspective, combined with bureaucratic inertia and a siloed approach to policymaking, slows the systemic transformation needed for sustainable food systems. Further challenges include late funding disbursements, limited public–private financing channels, and inadequate staffing within national government agencies, which hinder sustained outreach; Fragmented policy design—with siloed programmes and little agroecological integration—erodes coherence. Corruption and shifting political agendas, which serve to undermine trust and derail promising initiatives; infrastructural hurdles (e.g., seasonal or impassable roads noted by stakeholders in Cameroon) restrict community participation in national consultations; frequent turnover of government coordinators disrupts project continuity; and finally, it was noted that an overriding focus on export markets often sidelines domestic food security priorities.
- Stakeholders from **Business and Industry** highlight the absence of structured dialogue channels—such as advisory bodies or standing forums—to engage with policymakers at national and subnational levels. Consultation processes, where they exist, were noted as lacking transparency and often forced companies in markets like India and Germany to navigate through trade associations or written submissions. Political volatility creates an unpredictable policy landscape, compelling firms to constantly adjust engagement strategies. In crisis-affected settings, immediate emergency responses absorb government attention, squeezing out opportunities for longer-term collaboration. A lack of established relationships with key institutions further limits meaningful dialogue, while the wide spectrum of stakeholder receptivity demands highly tailored outreach approaches - some officials prove collaborative, others difficult to access.
- **Non-Governmental Organizationss and Local Community** actors consistently report a lack of stable, predictable platforms for dialogue. It was noted that consultations are sporadic or purely ad hoc, leaving grassroots groups struggling to secure seats at the table. An Indian NGO leader noted the difficulty of engaging the sprawling government bureaucracy. IPDR (Kenya) finds its advocacy hampered by pastoralism's marginalization in national policies, siloed engagement and scarce funding for long-term advocacy. Further compounding these issues are erratic government funding, slow bureaucratic processes that delay approvals and budgets, and opaque criteria for formal participation. Frequent turnover of focal points erodes institutional memory, and many decision-makers repeatedly engage only a small, familiar circle of organizations, overlooking grassroots voices (as Food

for Life Nepal has experienced). Poor cross-sector coordination, weak technical capacity, political gatekeeping, and logistical barriers in remote areas round out the obstacles.

- The challenges faced by **Youth and Women** include limited access to finance and productive resources, discriminatory gender norms and the absence of institutional support—particularly in fragile and crisis-affected areas. These stakeholders further report mobility restrictions, legal exclusion and language barriers that prevent meaningful participation in food systems governance. Moreover, several Youth and Women representatives highlight the burden of being included solely for representational or storytelling purposes, without access to policy tools or monitoring mechanisms.
- **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community stakeholders also** point to a profound shortage of structured engagement platforms. Chronic funding shortfalls and cumbersome bureaucratic processes stall agreements, legislation and disbursements, undermining timely follow-up on collaborative proposals. Intersectoral coordination remains weak, and innovative agendas—such as agroecology and pastoralism—are routinely sidelined in favor of intensive-agriculture priorities, despite increasing calls for transition to agroecology and food and nutrition security models. The People Centered Food Systems Programme (Colombia Climate School) warns that many national pathways were crafted without human-rights frameworks, making retrofitting for rights-based approaches exceedingly difficult even within UNFSS mechanisms. In the Netherlands, WUR reports that despite close ministry ties, no formal national food systems transformation plan has been adopted. In remote, high-altitude areas (e.g., for the University of Ladakh in India), logistical and climatic constraints limit participation in national forums and policy dialogues, leading to missed opportunities for collaboration and funding access. Similarly, the absence of integrated monitoring-evaluation platforms prevents effective data sharing, indicator analysis and adaptive learning throughout the transformation process.

Challenges in engaging with local governments

- Across **Farmers and Producers**, the primary obstacle is a severe shortage of financial resources, which curtails their ability to host meetings and facilitate participatory events. As one Ugandan respondent put it, "*we really have insufficient funds to run engagement meetings with local government leaders like local council chairpersons and district and parish councilors*." Another noted that "*very, very tight funding streams don't leave much extra in the budget to fund these activities*." Beyond money, sub-national authorities often struggle to localize national food systems pathways (as reported in the Philippines), frequent leadership turnover was noted as a barrier to ensuring continuity and maintaining sustained political engagement. In Nigeria, mistrust compounds the issue: "*staff at the local government always see us as threats and competitors who have come to take away their jobs*," leading to exclusionary administrative practices. In New Zealand, land-use decisions by local councils have even led to legal action by food producers seeking to protect vegetable cultivation in key growing areas. These examples illustrate that, alongside funding gaps, context-specific political and institutional factors can severely hamper engagement with local governments.
- For **Business and Industry actors**, experiences vary widely. In Italy's Veneto Region, a global agribusiness described its collaboration with the local agricultural agency as smooth and constructive—whereas a representative of an Italian business association reported having had no contact with any local government bodies at all,

highlighting that geographic proximity does not guarantee access. A Cameroon-based SME complained that it "*usually does not receive timely information about (local) government-led opportunities unless a member is already embedded in the organizing network*," meaning for example announcements arrive via social media after events have concluded. Even where no overt barrier is reported, companies stress the need for mutual respect and stakeholder alignment, pointing to an underlying desire for more inclusive, predictable governance dynamics.

- Voices from **Civil Society Organizations** point first to limited institutional capacity within local governments—municipal staff often lack the technical expertise or human resources to engage meaningfully, as noted by global networks like the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement Civil Society Secretariat and coalitions such as FOLU Ethiopia, which highlighted low awareness of national food-based dietary guidelines and the need for investment in local government capacity. Funding shortages at the sub-national level further restrict the rollout of science-based initiatives; for instance, a Polish NGO struggled to secure financing to implement a plant-based school programme across 2,400 municipalities. Bureaucratic complexity and fragmented departmental structures—particularly in South Asia and Africa—delay decision-making and obscure entry points for engagement. Turnover among local focal points erodes institutional memory, while district-level action plans frequently run in parallel to national pathways (for example in Malawi). In Nigeria, a **Women**'s organization lamented that state-level consultations often go unanswered, reinforcing a perception of one-way, extractive processes. Cultural obstacles—such as a top-down mindset reported in Malawi and resistance from meat and dairy lobbies (per the Plant-Based Treaty)—along with marginalization of **Youth** and **Indigenous** voices (Kenya's Mathira Tertiary Students Association and IPDR reports) underscore the need for more inclusive, well-resourced local governance platforms.
- **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community stakeholders** reported that the lack of formal engagement mechanisms with local authorities is glaring. Many institutions—including CGIAR centres report that local governments simply lack a clear understanding of food systems transformation or maintain only informal, network-dependent channels for collaboration (as experienced by Sciensano in Belgium). Karatina University (Kenya) and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (Nigeria) describe sparse communication from municipal bodies, while the University of Ladakh (India) details how conventional, production-focused mindsets among local officials stifle innovative projects (e.g., biogas-assisted greenhouse drying) and subject them to slow, multi-layered approval processes. Rigid funding schemes and the absence of dedicated budget lines further exclude innovation-driven models, such as biogas-assisted greenhouse drying or student-led micro-enterprises in fruit processing and short-term programme designs prioritize immediate outputs over systemic change. Despite these barriers, many universities continue to build trust through outreach and demonstration projects, underscoring the vital role of persistent, evidence-based engagement in reshaping local policy landscapes.

Challenges in engaging with the UN system

- Several **Farmers and Producers organizations** reported barriers to meaningful participation in UN processes, particularly related to access, visibility and procedural clarity. One of the most reported challenges was the lack of financial resources to participate in global meetings, especially those held in person. Both WFO and the VFI in Nigeria, as well as from Asia, emphasized that travel costs, visa expenses, and the absence of funding mechanisms limit the ability of grassroots farmers to be physically present in decision-making spaces. As WFO noted, "*Often, we do not have the necessary funds for travel, yet many key meetings are held in person.*"

Another recurring issue was the limited transparency and timeliness of communication regarding participation procedures. A respondent affiliated with the International Institute for Environment and Development and Nourishing Food Systems note that "*participation instructions are hard to find or published too late to enable joining*". Similarly, VFI reported a complete lack of information and clarity on how to engage, stating, "*You're absolutely on your own, no information, no awareness on how they operate.*" Some organizations also reported a disconnect between UN dialogues and the realities of local producers. Horticulture New Zealand commented that while producers were invited to participate in dialogues, "*the dialogues were disconnected from domestic producers and the real challenges being faced*."

Concerns over representation and inclusivity were raised by a Kenyan farmers organization which pointed out that "*there's no structured way of ensuring equal distribution of representation from other organizations*," suggesting a lack of equity in how participation opportunities are allocated.

In addition to these broader trends, individual organizations raised structural or contextual barriers. Reach Out Cameroon noted that proposals submitted to UN agencies were not funded or followed up. The AFA highlighted the difficulty of translating UN recommendations into tangible action. And VFI criticized what it described as exclusionary practices, emphasizing the lack of support, bureaucratic hurdles, and visa denials faced by farmer-led initiatives in Nigeria.

- **Civil Society Organizations** again noted the bureaucratic and administratively burdensome nature of UN engagement. The SUN Civil Society Secretariat described UN processes as slow and fragmented, noting that different agencies often operate in silos, which hinders coordinated action on food systems. IPDR, representing Indigenous pastoralist communities in Kenya, echoed these concerns, describing UN processes as "*document-heavy and slow*", particularly inaccessible to local organizations. The FOLU similarly pointed to stringent vetting and documentation requirements as a major barrier to participating in global forums.

  Several respondents mentioned the lack of clear entry points for civil society engagement. Welthungerhilfe noted that organizations are often unaware of how to participate meaningfully in UN-level processes. The Global Alliance for the Future of Food observed that while coordination tools like the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub exist, they are fragmented, requiring CSOs to track individual UN agencies across separate, often opaque channels. Such an issue can disproportionately affect less resourced actors, such as youth-led organizations, which often lack the networks or institutional leverage to navigate dispersed entry systems.

  Concerns about imbalanced representation and limited inclusivity were also raised. IPDR emphasized that while stakeholder engagement is promoted in theory, high-level forums remain dominated by larger players, making it difficult for Indigenous food systems—particularly pastoral livestock production—to be acknowledged. The Plant-Based Treaty, a global grassroots NGO, argued that entrenched meat and dairy lobbies in national governments influence UN positions, limiting space for plant-based advocacy. In Kenya, the Right to Food Coalition pointed to a disconnect between UN-level commitments and national implementation, noting that civil society often must act as a bridge — "*bringing Rome home*"— to ensure grassroots awareness of multilateral agreements.

  Funding constraints and procedural barriers were frequently cited. **Youth** organizations reported that invitations to global events often come without financial support, leaving individuals responsible for covering travel, visa

and accommodation costs. The Tarayana Foundation noted that funding is often ad hoc, limited in amount, and tied to extensive technical and financial reporting requirements. The global health non-profit organization PATH noted that administrative restrictions—such as limits on overhead costs—can make contracting and grant implementation unviable. For **Women**'s organizations, visa costs and funding gaps were also highlighted as persistent barriers.

In addition to these broader trends, some organizations raised further challenges. NiWAB (Nigeria) described receiving poor feedback after engaging with UN representatives, raising questions about the responsiveness and follow-through of institutional engagement. The Mathira Tertiary Students Association, a youth-led group in Kenya, reported that its leader "*felt devalued being a youth leader*," highlighting the perceived marginalization of young voices, even when formally included. Meanwhile, IPDR argued that UN support for food systems transformation remains heavily crop-focused, sidelining pastoralist contributions to sustainability, resilience and nutrition. This technical and epistemic exclusion—distinct from administrative hurdles—points to a deeper misalignment between UN programming and the lived realities of Indigenous food producers.

- Research Institutions and science and technology organizations from the **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** described a landscape of intermittent engagement with the UN system characterized by initial enthusiasm, but often followed by procedural barriers, limited follow-up and weak institutional alignment. A common concern was the difficulty in operationalizing collaborations, even with long-standing partners. For instance, WUR noted lengthy negotiations related to collaboration agreements. One research organization reported that despite their active participation in the Food Systems Summit process, it received no further information or engagement opportunities from the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub — pointing to the importance of sustained collabortion.

  Another challenge reported was the fragmentation within the UN system itself, which complicates alignment between research outputs and relevant UN programmes. One respondent from Cameroon spoke of sensitivity gaps, coordination failures and friction due to differences in organizational culture, particularly when local knowledge centres interact with the UN.

  Limited funding opportunities also restrict meaningful academic engagement, particularly for institutions seeking to translate research into long-term programming.

  Across the **Business and Industry** responses, a common concern was the lack of structured and transparent mechanisms through which business actors can participate consistently in global and national dialogues, including UN conferences.

  A U.S.-based non-profit business association active in international policy spaces noted the absence of formal avenues for private-sector involvement, which makes engagement ad hoc and often ineffective. Bayer echoed this concern, pointing to the limited opportunities for contributing to policy formulation and implementation, despite having actively engaged through global platforms like the Food Systems Summit. WBCSD highlighted the need for transparency around the criteria for business participation and speaker roles at global policy events, noting that private sector engagement on food systems transformation is needed more than ever, in the context of pressing sustainability and food security crises and declining aid budgets.

This issue of restricted access also affects smaller actors. One respondent from Cameroon, representing SMEs in agrifood processing, described how UN events often rely on government-nominated participant lists, which leads to the same individuals being repeatedly selected.

Respondents including WBCSD highlighted that political and narrative tensions surrounding the role of large agribusinesses in global food governance often underline these challenges and risk holding back business engagement on food systems transformation. For example, Bayer recalled that over 500 CSOs boycotted the Food Systems Summit in 2021 over concerns about private sector influence. They argue these dynamics limit private sector contributions to SDG delivery, especially in areas like smallholder support and climate resilience.

Challenges in engaging with multilateral development banks

- Among **Farmers and Producers' organizations** in particular, respondents highlighted that these financial institutions rarely work directly with farmers, limiting opportunities for collaboration. Another recurring challenge was the exclusion of smallholder farmers from marginalized regions, due to both structural and informational barriers. One organization from southeastern Nigeria stated that these institutions are often "*highly biased*," focusing on particular regions while offering "*no information or awareness, no engagement opportunities for us smallholder farmers in the socially and economically disadvantaged communities*." This respondent also pointed to bureaucratic barriers, nepotism and lack of transparency in decision-making processes.
- Although only a handful of **Business and Industry** respondents provided input on engagement with multilateral development banks, a few key challenges emerged. These included limited access to information, unclear engagement mechanisms, and exclusion from early-stage project design. One respondent also noted that green lending frameworks tend to prioritize emissions reduction over investment in low-emission sectors, such as horticulture.
- Several **Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Community** actors pointed to a disconnect between the priorities and mechanisms of financial institutions and the needs and approaches of non-profit stakeholders. Some organizations highlighted that the finance-driven and technocratic orientation of multilateral development banks tends to marginalize goals such as equity, nutrition and sustainability. For example, the SUN Civil Society Network noted that decision-making in these institutions is *"slow and heavily influenced by large member states,"* often prioritizing "*large-scale infrastructure projects or economic growth over social and environmental sustainability*."

  A second recurring challenge was the lack of clear and accessible engagement mechanisms. Many respondents expressed uncertainty about how to initiate collaboration with development banks or reported an absence of structured pathways for engagement. Welthungerhilfe Nepal explicitly stated, "*We don't know how to engage with multilateral organizations. Mechanism needs to be established*."

  Another reported issue was the limited inclusion of civil society and grassroots actors in financial governance and programme design, particularly in debt-related processes, noting that civil society's perspectives are not considered in the negotiation of debt terms or repayment frameworks.

A global multistakeholder coalition working globally to advance agroecology pointed to the conceptual unfamiliarity and institutional misalignment surrounding agroecology and food systems approaches, indicating that current policy and funding models are not conducive to supporting these transitions.

Similar to the issue raised by business and industry stakeholders, limited eligibility in the criteria for green/climate financing was raised by some CSO organizations as being very restrictive to engagement: GFN, for instance, explained that despite the role of food banks in reducing emissions through food waste prevention, "*eligibility criteria for climate finance are complex and often do not adequately recognize*" such impacts.

Although fewer in number and often less detailed, responses from **Youth and Women's organizations** echoed several challenges raised by civil society actors—particularly around restrictive eligibility criteria, lack of tailored financial instruments, and weak alignment between financial institutions and grassroots realities. One youth respondent from South Africa described application processes as "*lengthy, technical and resource-intensive,*" while another noted that requirements such as collateral and audited financials often exclude youth-led or informal initiatives. Women's organizations, similarly, reported high interest rates and unaffordable upfront contributions as key barriers to accessing finance.

Challenges in engaging with regional integration organizations

- Except for one organization from Asia, who reported existing engagement with both the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a recurring challenge cited among **Farmers and Producers organizations** is the lack of effective communication and formal representation channels with regional integration bodies, with someone pointing, for instance, that engagements have gaps in effective communication and the absence of a clear structure on representation of other organizations. Equally common was the limited direct engagement and visibility.
- **Business and Industry** also revealed accessibility issues. In contrast to most, Bayer described an active relationship with regional bodies such as the EU, African Union and ASEAN to promote sustainable agriculture. Nonetheless, they highlighted the need for "*more inclusivity and representation in decision-making forums*" and called for greater "*synergy to scale innovations*."
- **Civil Society Organizations** respondents reported a wide range of challenges in engaging with regional integration organizations, with several recurring themes. A common issue was the lack of accessible and visible entry points. The FOLU India and Welthungerhilfe, reported no visible engagement mechanisms or relevant opportunities to contribute.

  Another concern was the limited representation and influence of civil society in regional decision-making spaces. For example, the SUN Civil Society Network highlighted that high-level discussions are often dominated by powerful states, limiting CSO voices, and that food systems are often deprioritized in favour of trade or economic growth. Similarly, the Right to Food Coalition Kenya cited limited inclusion during post-Malabo processes due to a lack of awareness and unclear engagement procedures. In some cases, as SUN CSO Alliance of Liberia pointed out, civil society is perceived as oppositional and therefore excluded: "*regional bodies… often see non-state actors as opposition groups*."

Despite these challenges, there were isolated examples of successful collaboration. - for instance, the FOLU Kenya described positive engagement with the African Union, while a global coalition working to promote agroecology, noted existing entry points through individual EU and ASEAN member states, but highlighted persistent difficulties in engaging with the African Union and ECOWAS due to staff turnover and limited institutional capacity. While very few responses were received from **Youth groups and Women's organizations**, the tone of those that did respond suggests a broader sense of disengagement, frustration, and exclusion. Two respondents of organizations working globally explicitly stated that they have not had any access or experience with regional integration organizations. Although limited, these responses can point to a systemic lack of engagement opportunities and a potential feeling of being overlooked by institutional processes at the regional level.

- Among **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** a commonly cited issue was the lack of clear mechanisms for access and engagement. For instance, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University noted that activities are "*usually on invitation only and the procedure for getting [an] invitation is usually unclear*," while a respondent from Belgium's Sciensano observed that participation "*often depends on informal networks or project-based consortia, rather than open or transparent mechanisms*." Similarly, WUR observed that obtaining a concrete role within regional mechanisms often requires significant time and perseverance from their side.

  Another prominent theme was the mismatch between regional priorities and the goals of scientific or local stakeholders. A few respondents noted that regional bodies — particularly in the EU and ASEAN contexts — tend to prioritize economic and trade dimensions, often at the expense of sustainability, nutrition equity, or public health.

  Political and structural challenges were also reported, including instability, lack of representation, and inconsistent coordination. CNNCA (Cameroon) described how bureaucratic delays, underfunded innovation, and evaluation frameworks skewed toward quantitative indicators hampered their ability to engage effectively. They also shared how political transitions disrupted established collaborations. A positive experience was reported by a global research institution, which successfully engaged with ASEAN and the SICA (Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana) regional integration system.

Challenges in engaging with international NGOs

- Several stakeholders representing the **Farmers and Producers** group reported key challenges in engaging with international NGOs. A recurring concern relates to geographic and informational exclusion, especially among respondents from marginalized or underrepresented regions. For example, VFI in Nigeria noted that INGOs "*don't operate in our region*" and that local farmers lack access to information and engagement opportunities. ESAFF Uganda, a local small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement, similarly stated that they often "*don't receive the update and news*" about such organizations.

  Another common theme is the lack of coordination and synergy among international NGOs, which was raised by multiple respondents. IFOAM Organics International reported that "multiple international NGOs operate in the same region, but they do not communicate with each other to foster synergy, collaborate, or avoid duplication

of efforts," and emphasized the need for "*a much better respectful way to work with each other*." WFO echoed this challenge, stating that it is *"hard to have them all on the same page"* and difficult to remain actively engaged in various processes simultaneously. Limited access to funding and resources was also cited by several organizations as a barrier to meaningful participation. VFI mentioned that there is *"no funding for participation in their events and activities,"* resulting in a lack of inclusion and representation, confirmed by ESAFF Uganda. Lastly, a few isolated but critical challenges include administrative barriers and discriminatory practices. VFI pointed to *"bureaucratic and administrative barriers, nepotism and bigotry,"* and noted that some INGOs were not open to collaboration or partnerships, often focusing their efforts only on specific regions.

- **Non-Governmental Organizations**— reported several challenges in engaging with INGOs. A widely shared concern relates to limited access to funding and participation barriers. As funding requirements are often difficult to meet for community-oriented organizations, these exclude them from international collaborations. Another common theme was the lack of coordination mechanisms and transparent information sharing. Stakeholders such as PATH and Welthungerhilfe Nepal emphasized the need for improved dissemination of information about events and opportunities. The SUN Civil Society Alliance of Liberia also pointed to the absence of regular stakeholder coordination meetings that could facilitate collaboration.

  Some organizations raised concerns about INGO's limited understanding of local models and realities. The GFN explained that the systemic potential of food banks is often overlooked by INGOs. FOLU Ethiopia similarly noted that many INGOs operate with limited awareness of national food system and nutrition priorities.

  In contrast, **Local Community** actors such as one from Uganda and NeverEndingFood Permaculture expressed frustration with the lack of meaningful local engagement. They described inadequate mechanisms for dialogue and coordination, and criticized INGOs for organizing high-cost, externally driven activities without addressing local needs. As the latter noted, *"money shouldn't drive these structures."*

  Finally, many **Civil Society Organizations** raised concerns about power imbalances and competition. Welthungerhilfe observed that INGOs often compete for recognition and are reluctant to collaborate, while the Right to Food Coalition in Kenya noted that while international partners often enable engagement and dialogue, their support can be constrained by funding limitations and, at times, shaped by reputational concerns - particularly when advocacy demands are more politically sensitive.

- Although the specific challenges reported by **Youth groups and Women's organizations** often mirror those shared by other non-profit and grassroots actors, their perspectives bring important nuances that reflect deeper structural barriers. One women's organization from Africa emphasized the persistent lack of funding, while youth respondents from Kenya described feeling undervalued and struggling to be taken seriously in leadership roles. In addition, an organization representative of both youth and women mentioned the absence of clear and accessible mechanisms to initiate collaboration with international NGOs, noting that outreach efforts often go unanswered.

These reflections, although few, underscore how underrepresented groups often face the same systemic barriers as other stakeholders, but with fewer resources, less visibility, and lower perceived legitimacy. Their inclusion should therefore be intentional and prioritized to ensure truly inclusive engagement in food systems transformation.

- Organizations from the **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** reported a range of challenges in engaging with international NGOs, many of which mirror broader systemic patterns while also reflecting specific barriers to cross-sector collaboration. The most frequently cited concern relates to resource and capacity constraints. Institutions, in both high- and low-income contexts, highlighted the lack of funding and limited human or technical resources as major obstacles to participating in international partnerships. From universities to national knowledge centres, respondents pointed to difficulties in sustaining engagement with INGOs due to scarce financial opportunities and insufficient institutional capacity.

  Limited strategic alignment and fragmented priorities were identified as a barrier by a small number of respondents. Notably, one globally operating research institution emphasized the need for stronger coordination mechanisms to overcome siloed approaches and foster more effective collaboration across actors involved in food systems transformation.

  A more isolated but noteworthy perspective came from Sciensano, a public health research institution based in Belgium, which pointed to challenges of representation and inclusion within NGO-led platforms. They observed that engagement mechanisms often prioritize development and advocacy actors, leaving limited room for sustained input from the scientific community. This, combined with a lack of transparency, was seen as a barrier to evidence-based, multisectoral collaboration.

  No substantial feedback was received from Business and Industry stakeholders on challenges in engaging with NGOs. This limited response may reflect a broader gap in interaction or structured collaboration between these stakeholder groups, and points to a potential area for improved dialogue and engagement.

Challenges in engaging with multinational corporations

- A range of challenges emerged from **Farmers and Producers organizations** across diverse regions in their engagement with multinational corporations, with a recurrent concern being the lack of meaningful inclusion. WFO—an international entity with members worldwide, whose response therefore reflects a broad and global experience—highlighted the high risk of tokenism, where engagement is mostly symbolic. While funding is sometimes provided, it is often insufficient to ensure impactful participation, especially in contexts where capacity constraints are already significant. From Uganda and Kenya, respondents described a lack of access to representation and engagement spaces, limited awareness of the roles and responsibilities of multinational actors, and the perception that corporations engage only when it aligns with their own interests—pointing to a broader asymmetry in power and agency. In Nigeria, VFI reported exclusion based on geographic location—multinational corporations explicitly stated they did not operate in their region—as well as persistent bureaucratic and administrative hurdles, compounded by nepotism and bigotry.

- Within **Business and Industry**, respondents echoed challenges already reported by other stakeholder groups—such as limited opportunities for engagement, particularly for smaller actors or those based outside urban centres. However, a distinctive concern that emerged in this group, from a healthcare food business in Japan, was the difficulty of implementing shared principles across different cultural, legal, and regulatory contexts, which can hinder responsible procurement and ethical business practices. This reflects a unique tension between global corporate ambitions and the diverse realities of local markets.

  In at least one case, a degree of pragmatism in seeking operational solutions was highlighted: Bayer emphasized the value of clearly defined objectives and partner roles in effective collaboration, while acknowledging the effort required to turn broad goals into coordinated action. Mechanisms such as thematic working groups and pre-competitive platforms were cited as promising tools to enhance collective impact.

- Among **Non-Governmental Organizations**, engagement with multinational corporations revealed a recurring pattern of limited access to decision-making processes, misalignment of values, and operational fragmentation. From India and Ethiopia, organizations reported minimal engagement due to either limited capacity to reach corporate decision-makers or the low awareness and participation of multinational corporations in food systems transformation. In Liberia, civil society groups noted a lack of transparency, with corporations unwilling to share information about their mandates or programs. Similarly, in Bangladesh, a broad civil society coalition expressed philosophical misalignment with corporate approaches. Concerns around sustainability and health impacts were also evident: in Kenya, the Right to Food Coalition denounced corporate promotion of synthetic fertilizers and hazardous pesticides, which degrade soil and harm ecosystems. On the global stage, the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network warned against the aggressive marketing of breast milk substitutes in low-resource settings, in violation of international norms. In a more operational dimension, The GFN observed that despite corporate interest in reducing food waste, practical barriers—such as inadequate internal systems, liability concerns, and poor alignment between central strategies and local operations—often prevent meaningful action.

  Nonetheless, while these dynamics often reflect tensions and misalignment between civil society and multinational corporations, some industry-wide platforms have adopted a more collaborative approach. The Global Dairy Platform (GDP), for instance, maintains partnerships with non-profit organizations that share its commitment to sustainable and equitable food systems, offering a constructive model of engagement between civil society and industry actors. Also, rather than engaging directly with multinational corporations, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food has chosen a more strategic route: collaborating with industry associations that they consider more transparently and authentically committed to transforming food systems. This approach reflects a deliberate positioning that favors collective, mission-aligned spaces over bilateral corporate dialogue.

- Among **Youth and Women's organizations**, responses confirmed patterns already observed across broader civil society: limited access, lack of information, and invisibility within institutional engagement processes. Two representatives of women's organizations from Africa reported difficulties in accessing or engaging with multinational corporations, citing a lack of information or resources. Overall, while these voices echo challenges already raised by NGOs and CSOs, they do so from a position of heightened marginality where both generational and gender-based exclusions intersect with the systemic barriers already faced by civil society actors more broadly.

- Among **Local Communities**, engagement with multinational corporations is often perceived as disconnected from the lived realities of those most directly affected by food systems transformation. Respondents highlighted persistent communication gaps, making it difficult to understand or access corporate-led initiatives. In Uganda, this lack of clarity inhibits any form of meaningful collaboration. From Malawi, voices expressed frustration with the way engagement opportunities are structured: meetings are frequently disorganized, do not start on time, and offer little value for community members who must balance participation with the demands of running a business or farm. This suggests a mismatch between formal engagement processes and the practical conditions of local actors. More critically, concerns were raised about the influence of multinationals on government priorities, even when such agendas conflict with local needs. One respondent of a local community working globally pointed to the promotion of hybrid seeds and synthetic fertilizers at the expense of soil health and nutrition, emphasizing the need to defend agroecological approaches more aligned with the interests of rights holders. These insights reflect a deep asymmetry in power and agenda-setting, where community voices are not only underrepresented but often structurally sidelined.
- **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** offered a hybrid and technically grounded perspective on engagement with multinational corporations, one that reveals both structural-political obstacles and technical-operational limitations. From a structural standpoint, respondents noted asymmetries in power and influence, with corporations often shaping research agendas in ways that marginalize public interest or critical voices. Structural and operational challenges often converge: limited openness to co-creation and transparency has been reported, with respondents pointing to opaque engagement frameworks, reluctance to share proprietary data, and the absence of mechanisms for inclusive collaboration—an issue raised by institutions working in both Europe and the Global South. In parallel, several institutions from Ethiopia and Nigeria cited limited infrastructure, funding constraints, and unbalanced contractual conditions, which put local research actors at a disadvantage in partnerships with multinational corporations. Despite this, some voices acknowledged variability across the private sector. As noted by WUR, not all multinational corporations are alike, and in some cases, collaboration around technical content was found to be more straightforward than with other institutional partners.

  Together, these insights reflect a sector that is open to collaboration but remains highly sensitive to the terms, conditions, and power imbalances that often define the space of engagement.

Challenges in engaging with small and medium enterprises

Across all stakeholder groups, it was consistently reported that SMEs often lack financial, technical, human resources to participate in collaborative initiatives or long-term partnerships. This limited capacity affects their visibility, their access to support mechanisms, and their ability to engage meaningfully in food systems transformation. As a result, collaboration is often difficult or unsustainable unless specific support structures or intermediaries are in place.

- Engaging with SMEs presents several recurring challenges for stakeholders from **Civil Society Organizations**. A major constraint highlighted by many respondents is the limited availability of financial, technical, and human resources, both within the SMEs and the organizations attempting to engage with them. This issue was reported by European and African respondents alike.

  Another frequently mentioned challenge relates to logistical and operational barriers. The Global FoodBanking Network reported that while SMEs represent a potential source of food donations, their small volumes and scattered geographic locations create inefficiencies in collection systems. These logistical hurdles are compounded by the limited capacity of SMEs to participate in broader initiatives. For example, the already mentioned global coalition working to promote agroecology explained that many SMEs cannot afford to take part in coalition activities or regional events due to financial and human resource constraints.

  A third challenge concerns access to knowledge, expertise, and networks. As reported by the Agroecology Coalition, many SMEs operate in isolation and lack access to technical assistance or collaborative platforms that would enable them to adopt more sustainable and nutrition-sensitive practices. This fragmentation hinders the coordination of efforts and reduces the consistency of implementation across different regions.

  Despite these obstacles, these stakeholders also recognize the strategic role SMEs can play in local food systems and emphasize the importance of targeted support and stronger partnerships to unlock their potential.

- From Business and Industry, SMEs' limited financial and technical capacity was again mentioned.

  Bayer provided the most comprehensive account, acknowledging the key barriers SMEs face—from limited awareness of collaboration opportunities, to challenges with compliance, certification, and integration into formal markets. In response, Bayer has developed a range of targeted strategies to engage SMEs globally, including simplified processes, digital finance tools (e.g. with Mastercard and Rabo Partnerships in India), and partnerships with development organizations (e.g. USAID, IFC in Ukraine). Their work demonstrates how large corporations can help bridge capacity and information gaps, while embedding SMEs more effectively into sustainable value chains.

- **Youth and Women's organizations** reported challenges that align with broader civil society trends, particularly regarding these groups' and SMEs' limited financial and technical resources to engage. Additional barriers emerged that reflect the marginalization of youth voices and structural limitations: a youth association from Kenya reported a sense of being "*devalued*" as youth leaders, indicating a lack of recognition or legitimacy in engagement spaces.

  While responses were often less detailed, they underscore the importance of visibility and inclusion for youth and women's groups in shaping SME engagement strategies.

- **Farmers' and Producers' organizations** reflected a set of challenges consistent with those raised by other non-profit and grassroots stakeholders—particularly in relation to limited capacity, knowledge, and funding. Several respondents emphasized that SMEs often lack the human capital, technical skills, and financial resources necessary to engage meaningfully. For example, WFO noted that SMEs struggle to participate in decision-making processes due to information gaps and funding shortages. Beyond these structural limitations, contextual and external barriers were also highlighted. ESAFF Uganda pointed to conflict-related challenges, such as insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo, that restrict engagement with SMEs. Likewise, climate shocks like droughts and floods, as further noted by WFO, leave little space for small businesses to focus on broader collaboration or systems transformation. A few organizations reported no significant issues, either because SMEs were already part of their networks (e.g. Horticulture NZ) or because engagement was limited (IFOAM Organics Internationally) or occurred through intermediaries (e.g. Sciensano), reinforcing the possibility to diversify producer-SME relationships across regions and organizational models.
- Actors from **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** reported a number of challenges in engaging SMEs that largely reinforce patterns already observed across other stakeholder groups. These include limited financial, human, and technical capacity. Capacity gaps are often compounded by a lack of incentives, time, or structured platforms for dialogue, which limit SME participation in research or policy processes. One international research institute also flagged the fragmented nature of the SME ecosystem as a barrier to engagement—a concern echoed by a European research institute (Sciensano). Without strong representational structures or intermediary support mechanisms, engagement with SMEs tends to be diffuse, inconsistent, and difficult to sustain over time. This fragmentation makes it challenging to reach SMEs collectively or design inclusive initiatives that reflect their diverse needs and realities. Beyond these structural and organizational barriers, two more specific issues emerged. First, CNNCA from Cameroon reported instances of resistance to innovation, with some SMEs reluctant to adopt new digital tools due to fear of disruption. Second, the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University in Nigeria noted a misalignment of expectations, where SMEs may anticipate financial support as a condition for engagement—something that is not always feasible or appropriate in research or training contexts.

Challenges in engaging with academic and research institutions

- One of the key challenges reported by organizations representing **Farmers and Producers** is the disconnect between academic research and real-world needs. Several respondents pointed out that the priorities of researchers often fail to align with local concerns, making research outcomes irrelevant or impractical. As noted by a Turkish cooperative, "*the priorities of the local needs never match with the academic works," while one respondent from Kenya emphasized that "some research findings cannot benefit even the farmers*."

  A second major obstacle concerns the lack of meaningful collaboration opportunities, often compounded by financial or structural barriers. The AFA reported that *"there has been no co-research opportunities yet,"* while ESAFF Uganda highlighted the need for funding to partner with national research institutions, noting that "*sometimes [they] lack those funds to carry out those findings*." The issue of limited resources as a barrier to full engagement was also mentioned by the WFO. In some cases, opportunities do exist but remain inaccessible due

to formal requirements, such as the Nigerian farmers organization VFI's experience with PhD-level restrictions. One organization raised a more serious and isolated concern: a pattern of systemic exclusion and discrimination. They denounced nepotism, bigotry, lack of transparency, and the need to pay large sums of money just to partially participate in research programmes.

- Several NGOs highlighted financial constraints as a key barrier to effective collaboration with academic and research institutions. Organizations such as the GFN emphasized that limited funding often forces them to prioritize operational needs over research, despite the critical importance of data to support their programmes. High overhead rates and expensive collaboration fees quoted by university partners were also mentioned. It was noted that local research institutions often lack sufficient resources to support food systems transformation initiatives, and thus while there is willingness from academia, funding limitations often block meaningful partnerships.

  In other cases, respondents pointed to a disconnect between research priorities and local realities. The SUN Civil Society Secretariat warned that research agendas may be influenced by donors, and not always aligned with nutrition-sensitive or sustainable food system approaches. Their counterparts in Liberia described academic institutions as fragmented and difficult to engage. The Agroecology Coalition also noted a lack of visibility and engagement opportunities with research institutions in the Global South, despite counting more than 40 such organizations in its membership, most of which are based in the Global North.

  Despite these challenges, several organizations reported active or emerging collaborations with academic institutions. The Green REV Institute includes over 15 scientists and academics on its expert board and is organizing a major forum in partnership with a university. The Right to Food Coalition in Kenya has successfully developed evidence-based advocacy by working with local research partners. One international research institution expressed strong interest in growing its engagement with other stakeholders, while organizations like PATH and others are seeking to expand their networks to include global research institutions.

  While CSOs often frame their challenges in strategic and political terms—highlighting issues such as the disconnect between research and reality, donor-driven agendas, or the need for evidence-based advocacy—**Local Communities** tend to describe their experiences in more immediate and operational terms. Their responses reflect practical barriers to engagement, including limited access, weak coordination mechanisms, and logistical challenges. For example, one land rights organization in Uganda pointed to the scarcity of trained academic personnel at national level, as well as limited opportunities for interaction between farmers and academic institutions. Similarly, the Moirai Community Empowerment Group from Kenya emphasized that more information and structured engagement mechanisms would allow them to participate more actively and implement sustainable food system plans.

  Another respondent, NeverEndingFood Permaculture, stressed that better planning and mutual value creation could lead to greater participation and stronger outcomes. Finally, another respondent from Malawi, working closely with local communities, reported that although collaboration with research institutions exists, limited resources constrain their ability to generate robust evidence capable of influencing change at the national level.

- Although their responses were generally more concise, **Youth and Women's** organizations surfaced important insights that align with broader civil society concerns while also highlighting specific barriers. Like other non-profit actors, several of these groups identified limited funding as a major challenge, echoing a recurring theme across the wider civil society landscape. As expressed by two Women's Organization from Africa, adequate financial support is essential to facilitate research collaborations and to bring innovations to the field. The Nigerian Women in Agricultural Business Cooperative Society reported promising collaboration opportunities with academic institutions on topics such as tomato processing and fonio cultivation. However, funding was again identified as the main obstacle, despite institutional willingness and material support. Other respondents noted procedural barriers, such as excessive bureaucracy that can discourage engagement. While some organizations described positive interactions with research institutions, the overall picture calls for more inclusive, better-resourced, and practically accessible engagement pathways for youth and women's groups.

  The responses from **Business and Industry** stakeholders offered limited insight into structural challenges in collaborating with academic and research institutions. Two of the organizations that provided detailed answers – one from Japan, another from Italy – explicitly reported no significant engagement issues or noted that academia was not within their scope of interest. In contrast, Bayer, which acknowledged challenges such as mismatched timelines and trust concerns regarding corporate involvement in science. It also described efforts to enhance transparency, streamline collaboration, and promote co-design in research initiatives.

- Coming from **Education and Academia and Scientific and Technological Community** themselves closely involved in knowledge generation, the respondents here often provided more introspective and system-aware perspectives. They highlighted internal dynamics and structural constraints that affect collaboration. Similarly, they described challenges such as funding shortages, especially in contexts like Ethiopia and Nigeria, where limited resources hinder both domestic research capacity and external engagement. In addition to financial limitations, several respondents pointed to misalignment of research objectives, resistance to innovation, and lack of coordination. CNNCA from Cameroon offered a very detailed accounts, citing issues such as poor awareness of digital tools, burdensome administrative procedures, and insufficient technical capacity within educational institutions.

  Despite these constraints, some institutions shared examples of productive and evolving engagement, especially when aligned around concrete, impact-oriented goals. WUR observed that such collaborations can thrive when bureaucracy is minimized and partners share a multidisciplinary, solution-driven mindset. Likewise, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT reported strong engagement with national actors, tempered mainly by funding gaps. Sciensano, from Belgium, added a critical dimension, highlighting that public health voices—particularly early-career and interdisciplinary researchers—are often sidelined in food systems research consortia.

  Overall, these reflections show that even within the research ecosystem, collaboration is shaped by systemic inefficiencies, funding instability, and cultural gaps between innovation and tradition, which must be addressed to fully unlock the potential of science and technology in food systems transformation.

ANNEX 4: LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

The SENA Group and the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub would like to thank the individuals and organizations who contributed to this report by responding to the consultative questionnaire. These contributors should be considered as "*shadow authors*" of this report, in recognition of their valuable input:

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↓ Kazakhstan – Women farmers at work in Baibulak village, highlighting the role of small-scale producers in local food systems.
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